

BR 121 .H45 1916  
Henry, Francis Augustus,  
1847-  
Jesus and the Christian  
religion











JESUS

AND THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

BY

✓  
FRANCIS A. HENRY

*“Our Lord Jesus called himself Truth and not Habit: Whatever is taught contrary to truth is heresy, be it never so old a habit.”—TERTULLIAN.*

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
The Knickerbocker Press

1916

COPYRIGHT, 1916  
BY  
FRANCIS A. HENRY

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—THE GOSPEL . . . . .	I
II.—MESSIANISM . . . . .	65
III.—PAULINISM . . . . .	97
IV.—CATHOLICISM . . . . .	145
1. THE PERPETUATION OF JUDAISM. . . . .	145
2. THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE SACRAMENTS . . . . .	178
3. CREED AND DOGMA . . . . .	237
4. THE CANON . . . . .	259
5. THE CHURCH . . . . .	292
<i>a.</i> THE PAULINE CHURCHES . . . . .	292
<i>b.</i> THE CHURCH OF THE PASTORALS . . . . .	314
<i>c.</i> THE RISE OF THE HIERARCHY . . . . .	332
6. CHRISTOLOGY—DUALISM IN THOUGHT. . . . .	368
7. ASCETICISM—DUALISM IN LIFE . . . . .	385
8. THE CHURCH AS MEDIATOR . . . . .	397
9. AUTHORITY . . . . .	411
V.—CONCLUSION . . . . .	426



# Jesus and the Christian Religion

---

## I

### The Gospel

IN the world of today, in this time of swift movement and ceaseless change, many religious doctrines that have been handed down to us from former ages are coming to appear antiquated and outworn, and many traditional beliefs are losing their hold upon the minds of men. Certain articles of the ancient creed are called in question; some men are for rejecting them altogether and others claim to interpret them in a new sense without regard to what lay in the minds of their framers. In "religious circles" the relations between innovators and conservatives are daily becoming more strained and the air is filled with agitation and the strife of tongues. At such a time it would seem that we cannot do better than to turn from disputation and go back to the fountain-head of Christianity, the life and teaching of Him we call our Lord and Master; to try to enter into His mind and gain an insight of the religion He believed in and lived by. The following pages are an attempt to bring before the

reader some of the leading principles of that religion with the purpose and the hope of inducing him to make a thorough study of a subject until recently too much neglected—"the truth as it is in Jesus," and not as it is in the churches or in the Letter-writers of the New Testament.

Jesus was brought up to the carpenters' trade in a pious family of Nazareth, a country town of Lower Galilee, until at about the age of thirty, as it is said, he came before the people with a stock of profoundly original ideas, the seed of a religious revolution. The gospels tell us almost nothing of his life and circumstances during the intervening years, but their unwritten history is that of his mental and spiritual growth and change, the development within his soul of the new religion he was to give the world. From the man as we find him we may learn something of his boyhood and youth. To all the influences of the world about him, all shapes that life could show, his young soul must have opened with that eager receptivity which belongs to the temperament of genius, taking in from the whole range of its environment ever new experiences to nurture its growth. His love of nature, in his eyes radiant with the immanence of God, would lead him to the scenes of varied beauty surrounding his home, and his genial sympathies to the haunts of men and the free and natural life of Galilee.<sup>1</sup> Meantime the current of his inner life ran full. We find Jesus entering on his career equipped with a fulness of experience and a maturity of thought

<sup>1</sup> In his *Vie de Jésus* Renan draws an attractive picture of Nazareth, its white houses climbing the slope covered with the fig tree and the olive, and their gardens rich with flowers; and he adds: "Les environs, d'ailleurs, sont charmants, et nul endroit du monde ne fut si bien fait pour les rêves de l'absolu bonheur." Some hundred feet above the village the heights command a magnificent panorama of mountain, plain and distant sea, "a map of Old Testament history," which travelers have described in glowing terms.



acquired in his earlier years, when now he mingled freely with the world, and now withdrew from its thronging impressions and importunate activities to that solitude of self-communion which every man requires if he is to maintain a fixed and centred personality. For the religious man this resting of the self is a rest in God; and if Jesus was a Galilean in his fresh and vivid feeling for the spectacle of nature and the pageantry of life, he was an Israelite of the highest type in the depth and reality of his life in God. And he so lived in the world without him and the world within as to bring these into harmony. The manifold experiences of common life, and converse with men in the sober light of day, kept his heavenward aspirations and his musing introspections from becoming overwrought and morbid, while his profound religiousness, his sense of intimate communion with the All-Father, deepened his view of the outward world and lent a consecration to every aspect of its life.

It seems evident in the light of his later teaching that from early youth Jesus lived, silently and unmarked by those around him, an intense religious life, filled with aspirations toward perfection and the sense of an ever closer communion with God; while from his meditations on the Law and the Prophets and from the intuitions of his own heart a new ideal was gradually emerging to his view. A deeply religious nature is apt to be reserved, and even if Jesus had been disposed to expansiveness no one of his family or friends would have understood him. When he came preaching to Nazareth he found no hearing from his fellow-townsmen, who after the manner of the vulgar took offence at the superiority of one who had gone forth from among themselves; and, what must have been more depressing, he met with no sympathy from his mother and brothers (Mark vi, 1-4) who now followed him to Capernaum, or had already gone thither, to put him under

restraint on account of his unfortunate insanity: "to lay hold on him, for, they said, he is beside himself."<sup>1</sup> It is plain from this later experience that from the first his original conceptions, the daring flights of his religious genius, would have appeared to the home circle dangerous extravagances subversive of their placid orthodoxy. And indeed with this Jesus was getting out of touch. His early reverence for the Scribes and all their heavy learning was waning fast as he came to see that the rules of conduct imposed by the tradition of the Schools were often far from accordant with the spirit of the Law, while the cut and dried piety of outward observance, the chief interest of these Masters in Israel, and the punctilious pedantry that spent itself on petty details of religious practice must have seemed pitiful in contrast with the simple, noble religion of the old prophets. In religion as in all things Jesus was a lover of simplicity. A few great principles he found alone essential and sufficient: a fervent faith in God, a vigorous striving for righteousness, a loving helpfulness to men. A certain sense for inwardness and reality, such as made the strength of Puritanism, rendered him careless of external forms, and all that was mere surface and appearance roused his instinctive aversion. Prayer, for instance, was the very breath of his spiritual life, but this sublime dialogue between the human soul and the Eternal demanded the privacy of solitude. To repeat prescribed formulas at the street corners seemed to him "acting" (hypocrisy) a parody and profanation of the highest privilege of humanity.

How he lived in the old Scripture, his mind and memory steeped in its history, prophecy, and poetry, lies on the surface of his story, and we see how detailed and thorough was his knowledge when we find him holding his own in

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii, 21 and 31, 32. The section 22-30 is misplaced and should follow vii, 23.

frequent disputations with the Scribes whose life work was the study of God's Word. Yet Jesus dealt freely with the noble literature of his race. Accepting as a whole the tradition of the past, he let it run as it were through the filter of his consciousness, clarifying from all alien elements its eternal truth. The high morality of the Wisdom-books, the profoundly spiritual intuitions of the Prophets, the Psalms with their vibrant note of personal religion, their outpourings of the soul, appealed to him intensely; there was much else that left him quite indifferent. It was the criticism of the heart; almost unconsciously he brought all things to the test of his religious intuition, an inward light of calm deep certitude, putting aside as if it had not been written whatever was incongruous with his own idea of God, and by a sort of spontaneous selection finding only in the sacred writings what would nourish his own lofty and delicate soul. Such elements he would preserve and build upon as not out of harmony with other truths he had come to apprehend. As he said afterward: "Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who bringeth out of his treasure things old and new." For it was not by rejecting wholesale the religion of his people, but rather by reforming it or transforming it in his own mind that he came one day to see how far he had departed from what was "said by them of old time." And by this way of purification and simplification he was led on into the heart and essence of the divine revelation enshrined in the pages of the old record.

Nor was it only the written word that brought this revelation; he found it also in the book of nature and of life, and manifold messages of joy and love and trust came to him from the beauty of the Father's world. When after the Exile Jewish thought began to outgrow the anthropomorphism of earlier days it lost something of the truth wrapped in that illusion. More and more it took

a deistic trend that brought it to the worship of a divine absentee who had retired from the world. For Jesus He was the Living God of Israel's simple faith, a God immanent and ever active in the orderly course of nature. He did not set out with an *a priori* theory of the divine government of the world, but rather sought to find out by observation what was in reality the method of that government, and so he learned to read God's mind in nature's ways of working—wide, gradual, uniform and sure. No teacher of spiritual truth ever drew more inspiration from the silent voices of the natural world. The old belief of Israel was still prevalent among the pious that a man's worldly prosperity was a good conduct prize; but when the harvest was ripening in the sun, or when the parched earth was drinking in the fertilizing rain, Jesus noted that the heavenly Benefactor made no difference between the fields of the good and of the evil, revealing a magnanimity of impartial love infinitely surpassing men's petty notions of divine justice, and teaching by this example that we too ought to do good to those who hate us. Again, he saw the poor about him harassed with care for the wherewithal to provide the necessities of life, and this seemed to him a heathenish temper of mind. But if the people had forgotten God, He had not left Himself without witness to His remembrance of them in the birds of the air and the lilies of the field fed and clothed by His providence, shaming the faithless anxieties of men. The lower creatures neither sow nor reap; they toil not, for they cannot toil. Man who has this added power to work and earn may well trust his Father—not theirs—who cares for the helpless birds. A mind open to the teaching of such analogies could find "tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." The least things that fell under his close and keen observation came to Jesus charged with

suggestiveness; objects and incidents the simplest and most familiar spoke to him of God and lent their aid to his picturing of the Father's love. As he walked through the country or the streets of towns nothing of human interest escaped his kindly penetrating eye. He passes the provision stall and when afterward he would speak of God's protecting care remembers to say: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" He sees a woman sweeping her house for a lost coin and links that sight with God's eager seeking of the sinner. The homely incident of old skins bursting with the fermentation of new wine he will recall to teach that new truth breaks through fixed traditional forms, and the motherly hen gathering her brood safely under her wings he will take for an image of God's yearning to draw His rebellious people to Himself. And so the sheep following the shepherd, yet one or another going astray and roaming in the wild, the sower scattering his seed, the fisherman drawing his net, the man at the plow who must keep his eyes on his work, women leavening bread, children playing in the market-place, laborers waiting there for hire—all gave him material for his immortal stories and became the vehicle of a teaching the simplest and profoundest that the world has known.

But deeper and fuller than the revelation in Scripture or in Nature was that which spoke from his own inward experience. The pure depths of his religious consciousness revealed to him the greatest of all spiritual truths that man is the child of God. His true relation to the Infinite and Perfect One is not that of a subject to his monarch, nor of a sinner to his judge, but the relation of a son to his father.<sup>1</sup> God our Father! In the conviction and the

<sup>1</sup> "De ce qu'il sentait Dieu dans son cœur comme un Père, de ce qu'il ne pouvait le concevoir autrement, de ce que son cœur, profondément religieux, avait saisi par une intuition immédiate que tel était en effet le vrai rapport de Dieu avec lui, la conséquence implicite était que ce rapport



sentiment those words imply in one who speaks them, in the truth they express, seen with a breadth and realised with an intensity which made the experience of J  sus a vitalising power for his followers, lay the heart of his religion, the root principle of the deep new life he brought into the world. His soul was illumined by the consciousness intensely clear and certain, which no sorest trial could ever cloud or trouble, of his living union with God in the constant interchange of love, and his life was filled with the life of God as the atmosphere is filled with sunlight. This is religion in its purity and truth; this is that knowledge of God which is eternal life. And so this religion, or this life, is not a special kind of life, or a special sphere, but everyday life lived on a higher plane, the taking up of human life into its truth. The East has been the birth-place of a mysticism in which the God-consciousness overwhelms and absorbs the consciousness of self. Such Pantheism knows nothing of the nature of spirit, human or divine. God in him and he in God was the source and strength of Jesus' personality, and the more completely he was God-possessed the more he was himself. With his soul given to religion and bent on bringing men to God, we find no touch of the ecstatic in his message. His outlook on the world is sane, calm, clear-eyed, and nothing has power to disturb his inner freedom and serenity of soul.<sup>1</sup> And so his self-surrender to the Father was no

---

devait exister de m  me entre Dieu et les autres hommes; si du moins il n'existait pas en fait, il existait en droit." A. R  ville, *L'Enseignement de J  sus Christ*, 20.

<sup>1</sup> Arnold has called attention to the "sweet reasonableness" of Jesus, and it is this that maintained the balance and harmony of his nature. "It is owing to the all-pervading presence of this subtle virtue that in Christ, alone among men, we have faith without dogmatism, enthusiasm without fanaticism, strength without violence, idealism without visionariness, naturalness without materialism, freedom without licence, self-sacrifice without asceticism, purity without austerity, saintliness without morbidity,

self-abandonment, neither did it mean passivity; rather it constrained him to action, summoned him to concentrate all the energies of a heroic will on striving upward to the height of God's design, to conquer and win for himself a manhood transfigured into the glory of God's likeness. Jesus' own religion and his religion for all men is one of the loftiest idealism in faith and aspiration, and yet entirely measured, rational and sober, for it rests on facts of experience and works to a practical end.

The truth that God is the Father of men could only appear to a soul in which the image of God was reflected unblurred, because the mirror was without blemish. The revelation to Jesus, or his discovery, of God as Father is the manifestation and the proof of his absolutely normal humanity. He could not but see that other men were far from sharing his own filial consciousness, and some betrayed by their restlessness and discontent of soul their lack of harmony with God and with the higher self. As he looked beneath the surface of life, facing not fleeing from the evil of the world, the passions and the greed of men, their selfishness and sin did not escape his notice, and yet did not hide from him a capacity of higher feeling, a native goodness of heart that lived within them. In spite of all he found disordered and depraved in the lives of men he never lost sight of the infinite worth and dignity of the human soul, and with the love that hopeth all things he believed that its higher energies could free themselves with the help of God from all that clogged and corrupted them and come to full activity, and thus it should be born anew. And he came to feel that he too could help to this renewal if he could guide the people to a simpler and deeper religion than the formalism of the Scribes. His saying to his Disciples: "freely ye have received, freely

---

a light which was too clear to dazzle, a fire which was too intense to flame."  
*The Creed of Christ*, 205.

give" shows his feeling at this time that in being led to know the truth of life he was entrusted with a message and called to a mission; and more and more the intense sympathy of this lover of mankind filled him with longing to spread abroad the glad tidings of the heavenly Father and men's filial relation to Him which should lend their life a new motive power of hope and trust and aspiration.

The imprisonment of John was the event that called his cherished purpose into action, and Jesus went forth to carry out the work of the stern prophet on new lines in his preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. In these two words we have the substance of his teaching and its form: the one is for all ages and for all mankind, the other was the creation of a particular time and a peculiar people. The creation of a time, I say, for it is beyond the power of any individual to create an original "form" for the new truth he would teach. The teacher himself is of his time and dependent upon the social environment. The material he works upon is the whole complex of conceptions, religious, ethical, imaginative, which forms the common mental atmosphere. He must speak to his contemporaries, must use the language they understand and adopt for the vehicle of his new ideas, as the condition of their acceptance, the symbols or traditions with which the people are familiar. In time the new ideas will break up the imagery they began by utilising; the old form will become obsolete and the kernel shed the husk.<sup>1</sup>

The expectation of a "Kingdom of God," to be estab-

<sup>1</sup> "To express his definite idea of a reign of righteousness on earth the term 'Kingdom of God' was used by Jesus by way of accommodation to a vague and indefinite idea which had grown up in the course of Jewish history, and it recommended itself to him as a means of indicating and preserving the continuity of his teaching with the religious ideas current among the Jews." Mackintosh, *The Natural History of the Christian Religion*, 158.



lished by the fiat of almighty power, had long filled the mind and stirred the heart of the Jewish people when it was roused to a new intensity by the Baptist's declaration that the kingdom was "at hand." This expression, it may be noted here, is inexact and misleading, for what is meant by the Aramaic original is not a realm, a land and people subject to God, but the reign or rule of God, who seemed to be withdrawn into the heavens, effectively actualised in a world hitherto dominated by the powers of evil. The notions and fancies that gathered about this Hope of Israel during successive generations were multi-form and protean; vague conceptions of various origin and content were current in different circles, but never were combined into a definite system of belief. It may be said by way of general description that the people were looking for the prophetic "Day of Jehovah" to usher in the kingdom: a day of Battle, as many conceived it, when the power of the heathen should be broken and the enemies of Israel destroyed. Some trusted only to the might of Jehovah to bring the victory, others to the advent of a divinely appointed leader, a Messiah, an anointed "Son of David," endowed with special gifts and powers. There were others however who took the Day of Jehovah in another sense; for them it was a day of Judgment, when the nations should be summoned to the bar of the heavenly court and such as would not submit to the people of God given over to the avenging angels and doomed to everlasting punishment. After the Battle, or the Judgment—or according to some the judgment following the battle—the kingdom was to be established in a renovated Jerusalem. It would be the Kingdom of God, for God from the beginning was Israel's King, but in one view His rule was to be direct and personal, in another it would be exercised through His vicegerent, the Messiah. All the earth would be subject to the saints of the Most High, the pious child-

ren of Jacob; the dispersed among the Gentiles would be brought back to the Holy Land, and the dead would come forth from the grave to share with the living in the joys of supreme political ascendancy and boundless material well being. The point of chief moment is that different forms of the messianic hope tended to different practical results. The masses, for the most part, were praying for a warrior King to break the yoke of Rome and bring to Israel the world-dominion predicted in the Apocalypse of Daniel. Restless under pressure of poverty and social injustice, they were inclining to the Zealot party that urged a revolutionary initiative to hasten the coming of the kingdom. On the other hand, the Pharisees and the well-to-do classes, chiefly interested in the speculations of transcendental apocalyptic, were content to wait in patience for the day when in His good time God, and not man would bring in the new age; Judah was to be delivered, it was not to achieve deliverance.

It was the greatness of John the Baptist that in proclaiming the coming of the kingdom he insisted upon a moral regeneration of the people as its necessary precursor, thus reviving the prophetic ideal of righteousness and the prophetic protest against religious formalism. He called on men to repent, and to bring forth fruits of repentance in good works, and his endeavor was to found a community of those who by repentance had qualified for membership in the kingdom. It was the old faith in the salvation of a "remnant." Baptism, the sign of repentance, was to distinguish the children of the Kingdom from other Jews as circumcision distinguished the children of Abraham from other peoples. At a time when the sense of moral obligation was so perverted and the claims of social duty so ignored by the Pharisaic formalism, John's preaching came to men with startling power; yet while intensely earnest in its tone, it was somewhat narrow in its range

and superficial in its reach. It dealt with the outward deed, with duties generally recognised as such, but practically disregarded, not with the inward character which governs the conduct of life. More than all, it was unfortunate that the preaching of moral amendment was in great measure counteracted by his preaching of the kingdom. To John as to others the Kingdom of God meant a visible theocracy supernaturally inaugurated by a sort of divine *coup d'état*. This long-expected event was now about to come to pass; no wonder if the thrilling announcement carried men away and filled their rapt minds to the exclusion of all else. Moreover the belief had become prevalent that the coming kingdom was of itself to establish the nation in righteousness, and this would dispose the people to continue their attitude of passive expectancy, untroubled by the call to energetic moral action. That he held to the delusive Hope of Israel in all its sensuous features was fatal to the work of the moral reformer. Whatever the immediate response evoked by his effort to uplift the people, it would have made no permanent impression had it not been taken up by a greater than he.

It was only with John's preaching of the Kingdom that the message of Jesus could find any link of connection or point of departure. He could have little sympathy with the extravagant dreams of political messianism so alluring to the vulgar mind. The satisfaction of a long-nursed vindictiveness and the triumph of a narrow national egoism must have seemed to him objects of a hope that was neither reasonable nor religious. Nor could the eschatological pictures of apocalyptic fancy any better commend themselves to his calm and sober intelligence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> More than this, the underlying ideas from which the Jewish hope arose were in contradiction with his own. "The messianic dream was the outcome of a struggle between Israel's trust in the promises of his supernatural

Yet his thoughts were not as John's thoughts. Because the Synoptists tell us that Jesus began his ministry with an announcement identical in form with that of John, some writers—who will have it that whatever differentiates Christianity from Judaism is due to Paul—infer that the preaching of Jesus was little else than a continuation of his predecessor's. This is to ignore Jesus' estimate of the Baptist given us in his words: "Among those born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; yet he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Before John the Kingdom was a prophecy; with him for the first time belief in it became practical. More than a prophet, in that the prophets had waited for Jehovah to do all, John proceeded to action. His effort was to "prepare the way of the Lord" and in some measure to begin among the people the work that Jehovah would complete. But the preaching of "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" disclosed its negative tendency in the motive it urged—escape from the terrors of the judgment. It was still the Judaic view of the kingdom that possessed the Baptist. Its entrance was by the well-worn path of outward usages, and soon the strong sweep of the new religious movement was falling into the narrow channel of asceticism.

If the expression "Kingdom of God" was an old one both for Jesus and for John, the idea which the former

---

God and his atheistical distrust of Nature. The world as he saw it was bereft of God's presence, and except for a miracle, irredeemably evil. But sooner or later the promises would be fulfilled, the reign of Satan would be ended and the Kingdom of God would come upon earth. The premisses from which Christ started were the very negation of those from which Israel had evolved his fantastic hope. The world as Christ saw it was under the rule, not of Satan but of God, and Nature, far from being irredeemably evil, was animated and illumined by the Divine Presence. To look forward to the coming of the kingdom of God as to a future event was a waste of hope and a misuse of faith. The kingdom was already in our midst and all that men needed to do was to realise its presence." *The Creed of Christ*, 119.

expressed by it was new and distinctively his own. The kingdom he had in view was different in its nature and its mode of coming from that of any antecedent prophecy. In employing the formula of John to convey a new meaning Jesus was following the way of all religious reformers, who seek to link their new teaching with the old beliefs in order to gain the general ear, to be readily understood and to avoid opposition while awakening attention. "On this flexible phrase, with its capacity for spiritualisation, Jesus fastened when he would describe his mission."<sup>1</sup> The conception of the Kingdom as the establishment of the nation in righteousness was the preserving salt, the one redeeming element, in the fantastic messianic expectations, and this Jesus laid hold of to bring into clear prominence. To his mind "the only possible Kingdom of God was the reign of righteousness in the souls of individuals and in society as composed of individuals" (Mackintosh). That is, the moral regeneration of the people was not the precondition of the Kingdom, but the Kingdom itself. The reign of righteousness and the reign of God were one and the same and did not admit of being viewed as distinct conceptions. It was his aim to appeal to the innate ethical sentiment of his people, to deepen and purify their idea of righteousness and thus quietly to displace their idea of the Kingdom of God by one radically different—to lead their thoughts from an outward Kingdom of the world to an inward Kingdom of the spirit.

It follows that in the view of Jesus the coming of the Kingdom could be in no wise catastrophic, for it was nothing else than the gradual growth of a better life in the world. Supernaturalism in any form was something repugnant to his religious instinct, resting as it does upon the unavowed dualism which conceives nature as alien to the divine. Thus it was that he came to draw from the

<sup>1</sup> Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, 94.



life of nature the figures in which he spoke of spiritual things; for the analogies between the natural and the spiritual worlds, Bacon tells us, "Are not mere similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive, but the same footsteps of God treading and printing upon several matters." A perfect social state, the golden age of righteousness and of the blessedness it brings, could only come in the continuous evolution of a germ of life latent in the nature of man: "So is the Kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself: first the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear." The seed and the soil are made for one another. When the soil with its properties receives the seed with its properties there springs from it a new life. So it is with human nature and the influence of the divine. The spiritual seed may be scarcely perceptible, but it holds the power of a mighty growth; even as the mustard seed, the least of all seeds, "becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air lodge in the branches thereof." These simple parables anticipate our latest science which applies to social progress that principle of development which works in the process of nature. And as these tell of the Kingdom's organic growth, another describes it as an active energy: "The Kingdom of God is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."<sup>1</sup> So then there was no need

<sup>1</sup> We read in Mark iv, 11-12, that only to the inner circle of disciples was it given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, while those without it were addressed in parables, so that they might not perceive nor understand, lest they should be converted and forgiven. This view of the parables as an esoteric teaching requiring a special interpretation is a ludicrous blunder, and the motive alleged for the parabolic method a calumny on Jesus. It seems that the Evangelist, duped by a word, confuses the parables of Jesus with the allegories of the Apocalypses, and

of new heavens and a new earth, but rather that men should open their eyes to the presence of the Divine Spirit here and now in the course of nature and the consciousness of men. As electricity has always been a force conditioning the physical life of man, but has only recently become known and turned to man's uses, so the reign of God through the spiritual laws that guide and govern human life had always been existent among men, only it had been latent and unperceived. What Jesus did was to reveal it. He did not found the Kingdom, he disclosed it to men's eyes; he told them of its nature and showed them the way to enter it. For in a sense it was already come, or if men would only enter it that would be its coming; as they give themselves to God and goodness they work with Him to bring the Kingdom, already here in promise and potency, to full realisation in the life of the world. Thus it is that Jesus speaks of the Kingdom now as existent and again as still to come. It was here, as a mustard seed, in his own life and in the lives of disciples who through sympathy with him had gained a new religious consciousness; and from this beginning it would gradually extend its sway over society at large. To the Pharisee's question when the Kingdom of God should come, he replied: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there, for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you."<sup>1</sup>

---

having in mind the failure of the Gospel preaching among the Jewish people as a whole, offers in its explanation this theory that Jesus spoke in parables in order not to be understood. In truth of course he taught in parables because that is an admirably vivid and effective way of teaching. His parable discovers a natural analogy which mirrors a spiritual truth; an allegory on the other hand is an artificial construction, and to give the parables of Jesus an allegorical interpretation leads to strangely disastrous results, as may be gathered from Patristic writings and the well-known work of Archbishop Trench.

<sup>1</sup> "That the Kingdom of God is 'within you,' in your hearts, is the only possible meaning of *ἐν τοῖς ὑμῶν*; 'in your midst,' in your vicinity, would be

That is, the Kingdom has its seat in the hearts of men; it is in its nature an inward thing, a state or character of soul that shall by degrees pervade and actuate society. If in one view it is a divine social order taking the place of those founded on principles unsound or iniquitous, it is also and first of all the dominating influence of God in the lives of individual men. It is the rule of God over, or rather in, the conscience and the will, freely recognised by men and fixing them in righteousness—not a special religious kind of righteousness, but that which concerns the ordinary conduct and the common relations of life. Do not give way to anger, be forgiving, turn from evil thoughts, do not judge your fellow-men, be not ostentatiously pious, nor think you can pay acceptable worship to God while at variance with your brother, be truthful, let your word be binding as an oath, be merciful and charitable, return good for evil; he that doeth these sayings builds his house upon a rock. It is as simple as that. It is in such things as these that the Kingdom consists, and there is no hint of anything else. And so the Kingdom of God which had been pictured to fancy was now to reveal itself in the heart. The Jews looked for a transformation of the

---

expressed by *ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν*." This pronouncement of Pfleiderer may not meet with acceptance from all Greek scholars, but obviously the rendering "within you" is the one that goes better with the context. The conjunction "for" introduces an explanation of something previously said, or gives a reason for it, and here it is the inward nature of the Kingdom that explains why it cannot be seen and located. If it were its presence among men that Jesus declared we should rather expect him to say, the Kingdom cannot be perceived although it is in your midst. It is a common objection that Jesus was addressing the Pharisees and could not have said to *them*, the Kingdom of God is within you. But surely "you" is to be taken here in the abstract sense, as if we should say to a discontented egoist grumbling at human life, the sources of happiness are within you. If, however, we adopt the other reading we do not lose the substance of Jesus' answer; a kingdom that is a present reality and yet remains invisible can only be a spiritual Kingdom.



present "sorry scheme of things" into a perfect social state, a creation of divine omnipotence which should burst in sudden splendor on a passive world; the transformation Jesus hoped for was one that should take place in the lives of men, who must win for themselves new hearts, motives, dispositions. The coming of the reign of God meant a gradual soul-growth,—of the individual soul and of the general soul of man,—into oneness with the indwelling spirit of God. The Kingdom of God is within you: these words of Jesus, revealing the meaning and the aim of life, were the manifesto of his religion, and "the hour in which he uttered them witnessed the birth of Christianity."<sup>1</sup> They were a light that broke through the enveloping fog of Jewish messianism, and Paul himself in a moment of clear vision could say of the Kingdom that it is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Can we fail to see how widely different from the Kingdom of Jewish expectation was the inward and spiritual Kingdom which Jesus announced; is it not plain that the negation of the Jewish idea is precisely the novelty of his doctrine? On this point Colani sums up in these words:

"Jesus cleared up the confusion of the temporal with the spiritual inherent in the whole theocratic idea of Israel. In his conception the realisation of the Kingdom of God was an ideal humanity where no trace of the pretended privilege of the Jew was to be found. In his view of the future an organic development took the place of the catastrophies of the apocalypses. In a word, he broke with messianism which con-

<sup>1</sup> "We hold that this was the grand disclosure which Jesus made to the world, on which his claim to a unique place in the history of religion may be chiefly rested." Mackintosh, *The Natural History of the Christian Religion*, 156.

"When we take into account all that Jesus' idea of the Kingdom implies, it is far and away the greatest achievement in religious thought which the world has witnessed." A. K. Rogers, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus*, 214.

sisted precisely in the confusion of the temporal and spiritual, in the haughty affirmation of the Jew's right to the exclusive regard of Providence, and in the expectation of a sudden overthrow of all things."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus Christ et les Croyances Messianiques de son Temps*, 103.

It seems a strange, it seems a perverse blindness to what is palpably distinctive in the teaching of Jesus that holds him to have been possessed by the apocalyptic conceptions of the Kingdom which ruled the mind of the people. In a recent work—*The Historic Jesus* by C. S. Lester—we find this contention maintained: "It needs always to be borne in mind that Jesus expected the Kingdom of God to come suddenly, quickly, and supernaturally, God Himself appearing in the clouds to establish His personal reign"—p. 138. This statement is repeated in nearly the same terms on pp. 158 and 182. A little later the author dimly perceives that his position involves him in some difficulty. On p. 242 we read: "It is perfectly evident that Jesus shared the popular belief that the Kingdom of God meant the establishment of God's personal sovereignty over the Jewish people, and that he derived his overwhelming enthusiasm from his belief that the great catastrophe would happen suddenly and soon. He could not therefore have taught the entirely contradictory belief that the Kingdom was to be a gradual and invisible growth in human hearts, and it is necessary to find some way to reconcile this apparent contradiction in his teaching." It need hardly be said that the endeavor to find this way of reconciliation can only meet with failure. The way the author finds is to assert that the Kingdom of God within men must mean their inward conviction that the Kingdom of the popular belief was near at hand, which seems a scarcely satisfactory interpretation; and the "apparent" contradiction is rather accentuated than reconciled by reference to the words of Jesus in the "Synoptic Apocalypse" which, as will appear later, are not his words at all. A remark of Harnack's seems pertinent here: "It is considered a perverse procedure to judge eminent, epoch-making personalities first and foremost by what they share with their contemporaries, and on the other hand to put what is great and characteristic in them into the background." The following citation from Mackintosh (*op. cit.* 144-145.) seems to dispose of the matter in question: "Jesus' simple fundamental proposition with regard to it was that the Kingdom was within men, *i. e.*, spiritual and ideal; and this proposition—whose authenticity is guaranteed by the fact of its being reported as his by men to whose ideas on the subject it ran counter—must be held to control the interpretation of all his utterances concerning it, whether made by himself or by disciples in his name. . . . And the circumstance that the personal followers of Jesus clung to the idea of a second advent and a new earth is a proof not that Jesus had given encouragement to such an idea, but that inherited Jewish notions retained a hold of their minds in spite of his teaching, and that the natural tendency to

Jesus tells us in his figurative way of speech that the Kingdom of heaven, or eternal life—we find in Mark ix, 43-47, that the two expressions are synonymous—is the treasure hid in the field, or the pearl of great price which men sell all they own to buy; that is, it is the one goal and prize of human striving. And if it comes from a radical change for the better in the hearts and wills of men, then so far from being a work of God independent of human co-operation, there can be no coming of the Kingdom until men become workers together with God. There are no divine forces that can make men righteous without effort of their own. The ideal social state is not an order from which men acquire holiness, but one to which they give it. Jewish piety was quietism; it was typified in Simeon, “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” This was the watchword, “wait”—wait for a salvation that should be brought to the chosen people by a sovereign act of God, and in no sense effected by an act of their own. Such reliance on divine interposition was fatal to all strenuous moral effort. The Jews looking to Jehovah to save them were like the peasant who called on Zeus to lift his mired cart, and Jehovah gave them the god’s reply. The Kingdom was not to be waited for, but worked for; it would not come upon them from above, for it must spring up from within. “The Kingdom of heaven,” said

---

exchange the pure idea for a sensuous embodiment of it was too strong for them and prevented them from entering fully into his thought. For such reasons we are disposed not to accept as genuine any language attributed to him which is inconsistent with the idea.”

To “the scholar who recognises the inevitable retouching of any words of Jesus on this subject in view of the current apocalyptic ideas” (Schmidt) it will be evident that the apocalyptic Jesus of Mr. Lester’s book is not the Jesus of history. If that Jesus had indeed shared the delusions of his countrymen, or if his Gospel of a spiritual Kingdom had not survived in the hearts of his followers—overlaid and almost smothered though it was by Jewish messianism—Christianity as the world knows it never would have come into existence.

Jesus, "is broken into and the violent take it by force." It was the language of hyperbole to mark the contrast between the Kingdom of his message and that of the messianic hope; it summoned men to drop their attitude of passive expectancy, of dependence on supernatural aid, for the exertion of a resolute moral energy. Simple as this may seem, it is enough, if it be acted on, to change the whole aspect of religion, the whole character of the spiritual life. Unhappily it is not always acted on. Multitudes of Christians have reverted to the Jewish passivity, trusting to the Saviour Christ to do for them what they do not try to do for themselves.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is not merely a religion for the saving of one's soul, but for the salvation of the world. It teaches that a man's religion is not merely his own affair, but a social obligation; that religion must become a social force to permeate all human relationships—domestic, commercial, political and every other—to change and regenerate all human living. How is this to be attained? To better the affairs of men by efforts from outside them is a method tried again and again and always cheating expectation. The world is noisy with attempts to reform society by some scheme of corporate action by which we may sit still and be made into the right kind of men, but history records nothing more futile than the efforts to realise outwardly a social utopia that has never been inwardly realised, to elevate the masses without touching the units of the mass, to fashion individuals after some social type rather than to reorganise society through the regeneration of its individual members. It is a prevalent belief that the way to a perfect social state is by providing men with a set of perfect circumstances, relying upon things to be done for us rather than things to be done by us; but the social order is a product not of mechanism but of personality, social problems are human problems and

there is no settlement that does not reach to the characters of men.<sup>1</sup> New machineries will be tried in vain unless there is a new humanity behind them. You cannot make new cards by shuffling the pack, and you cannot produce a new society by mechanical rearrangement of its elements unchanged. To remake human conditions you must remake men.<sup>2</sup> This was the method of Jesus; it is the radical method, the one that goes to the root of the matter. He saw that before his Gospel could take effect upon Jewish society it had first to take effect on the individuals composing it. He saw that to reach the individual is the way to reach society, and the only way.<sup>3</sup> He had no faith in adjustments of environment; he had faith only in inwardness and self-reconstruction. He went to the depths of the individual soul for the re-creative energies that should produce a new society. He felt that if he could make men, the men would make the kingdom. And so his aim was to inspire, and spiritually energise the personal life, and from that starting-point the life of mankind. This was to work not for an age but for all time; and still today he calls us back from all quack panaceas for the world's reform to the reform of our own selves, the one thing needed. We find him regarding all social issues

<sup>1</sup> For some vigorous writing on the effect of State paternalism upon individual character see *Germany and the Germans* by Price Collier, 365-367.

<sup>2</sup> "La plupart des esprits sont mécaniques, et croient qu'en changeant les rouages on change les hommes." G. Hanotaux, *Jeanne Darc*, 147. This is the author's comment on the proceedings of the Council of Basle and explains why the efforts of the Churchmen came to nothing, though the word Reform was on the lips of all men. At this moment the effects of individual initiative were seen in pointed contrast. The awakening of France was due to the inspiring personality of the Maid, evoking a responsive outburst of patriotic ardor from the hearts of the people.

<sup>3</sup> "The religion Jesus brought into the world is something personal. In the strict sense it can never be realised save in individuals, and Christians are at all times single individuals." Wernle, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ii, 343.



with a certain detachment and unconcern, as of one whose eye is fixed upon an end in which they will find their own solution. He knew no social classes, no distinctions of rich and poor, educated and ignorant: he dealt with men as men. His approach to the world's life was from within, and his fixed faith that all advance to a higher human life must begin where alone ideas and aspirations can have birth, in the minds and hearts of men.<sup>1</sup> Hence the call of the Gospel was addressed not to the masses but to individuals, receptive hearers whom Jesus sought to imbue with the spirit of his own life.<sup>2</sup> He concentrated his efforts on the individual soul, and looked to its faithfulness, its energy of conscience, its warmth of generous affection for the initiative in the happy change the ages should bring in the life of the world. For the communication of vitality from these quickened single lives would be the coming of the Kingdom. "The blessed influence of one true loving human soul upon another" is an energy constantly at work throughout the world of men, not calculable by mathematics, but mighty as the power of attraction by which one planet shapes another's course. And it is this that brings nearer that Kingdom of God for which else we sigh and scheme in vain. And so the men who followed Jesus, who had ears to hear him, were as a salt, a light, a leaven in the world,—a force, that is, that works unseen and silently like every vital force. By simply living

<sup>1</sup> "Reverence for the individual and the never-failing faith that the best and highest good must be given to men from within, by directly touching the springs of action and renovating the elements of character—not from without, by changing their surroundings—this is the distinctive mark of Christianity; and when we forget this we cease to be the disciples of Jesus." Carpenter and Wicksteed, *Studies in Theology*, 290.

<sup>2</sup> "The method of Jesus was the successive winning of separate souls, now an Andrew, now a Peter, now a Philip, until he had discovered and drawn to himself a few men and women fitted to herald and inaugurate a higher and more perfect social life." McConnell, *Christianity: an Interpretation*, 197.

their own new life these men would change other lives into their likeness by contact of life with life. And this is matter of history; it was in this way the Christian Brotherhood took rise.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that just because it is so intensely personal the Gospel is a universal message. If its appeal is simply to the heart and soul, it appeals to humanity, and it is not the Jew but the man who has it in him to become a son of God. This implication of his teaching lay in its very nature, and Jesus did not fail to impress it upon his narrow-minded countrymen. It is an odd misapprehension that looks upon the Preacher of the Gospel as only a Jewish reformer, caring only for his own people, not looking beyond Palestine, sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The passages in Matthew to this effect, taken from a Jewish-Christian source, are allowed to stand in this late ecclesiastical gospel because in its time the question of the restriction of the Gospel preaching to the Jews had long ceased to be one of practical importance. In the episode of the Centurion (Matt. viii) we find Jesus saying that he had not found in Israel so great faith as this Gentile's, and that many should come from the east and the west and sit down with the patriarchs in the Kingdom of Heaven. The parable of the Good Samaritan, an alien and a heretic, shows how he put human nature in its generality, we might say in its nudity, above all differences of race or religion. The Gospel of Jesus could not possibly have been confined within the narrow limits of Jewish exclusiveness. The universalism of Christianity was not an idea originated by St. Paul, but he saw clearly what Stephen before him had less clearly seen,

<sup>1</sup> "The regenerating force in human society has been and is that innumerable company of men and women who have been transformed in the image and likeness of Christ. Outwardly they look and act much as other men, but essentially they are new creatures." McConnell, *op. cit.*, 199.

that universalism was of the essence of the Gospel; for this he battled with the Judaisers, and the victory he did not live to see changed the faith of a Jewish sect into a world religion. That the Gospel of Jesus derives historically from the religion of Israel—though in relation to Judaism it was rather a recoil and reaction than a development—is a point which has been so over-emphasised that it tends to obscure the essential originality of Jesus' teaching.<sup>1</sup> As the value of a diamond ring is in the stone, not the setting, and while the setting is in the taste and workmanship of a given period, the diamond is for all time: so the antecedents and the contemporary surroundings of the Gospel are matters relatively unimportant, and it remains independent of external conditions.

That Gospel awakened the consciousness of a personal relation to God which, being one and the same for all men, shows itself to be the human relation; that is, God is the God of mankind. And this was a distinctly new idea. The conception of monotheism remained undeveloped and imperfect in the religion of Israel. The effort of the earlier prophets was to suppress the prevalent polytheistic worship and implant the conviction that Jehovah was the one and only God of his chosen people. Beyond this no appreciable advance was made before the captivity. Jeremiah is the first to declare that the gods of the nations are but vanity and beside the God of Israel there exists no other, and this thought is dwelt upon with greater fulness and emphasis by the prophet of Babylon, called the Second Isaiah. But this was still a particularistic conception, a monotheism within the bounds of nationality.

<sup>1</sup> "The teaching of Jesus will at once bring us by steps, which if few, will be great, to a height where its connection with Judaism is seen to be only a loose one, and most of the threads leading from it into contemporary history become of no importance at all." Harnack, *What is Christianity* (Eng. tr. of *Der Wesen des Christentums*), 17.



It was not a universal religion that the prophets opposed to the religions of the nations, but merely their own national religion, and it was their expectation that the world would be converted to the worship of Israel's God and acknowledge his unshared sovereignty. The monotheism of the Gospel breaks down all fences of nationalism because its God is not the God of a nation but of the individual, of man simply as man. To this idea not even the noblest of the prophets was able to rise, and this God is the pivotal centre of the Gospel revelation.

While in the best thought of the people the Kingdom of God meant the sovereignty of the Most High over his human subjects, Jesus conceived it as the union of God above with men below, through their sense of fellowship with His Spirit, overcoming the old abysmal contrast of human and divine. We come a little closer to his idea of the Kingdom if we note that while the people were taken up with speculations about its coming, filling in the outlines of the picture according to their fancies and predilections, Jesus thought first of all about God, and it was his conception of God, not as an almighty Power but an unchanging Love, that determined his conception of the Kingdom. While the people obeyed in fear a stern Lawgiver and Judge who had laid upon weak mankind a yoke of exaction too heavy for it to bear, Jesus saw in God the Father of men who had loved them from the beginning of the world. The old Scriptures speak of God as the King and the Holy One of Israel; they know Him in the attributes of righteousness and power. Some faint intuition of a divine love, of God as Father of the nation, comes indeed to the tender-hearted Hosea, and later prophets repeat the name; but a divine fatherhood restricted to Israel excludes the idea of the universal fatherhood, and as Father of the personal soul He is not

known.<sup>1</sup> The Psalms, for all their personal note, appeal to Him by other names: Saviour, Shepherd, Shield, Refuge, Rock of salvation, a present Help in trouble. And now the later day of Judaism had lost the prophetic inspiration, and the Psalmist's cry of the heart, My God! had long died into silence. It is true that in a regular form of prayer God was addressed as Father, but like so much in Jewish piety that seems well and is mere seeming, the name was empty of all real meaning. The Law laid an iron grasp upon its devotees; they were subjects and servants; God and man were separated by a gulf, and any immediate communion between them was something inconceivable. Just this immediate communion was the conscious experience of Jesus, and his experience was the revelation of God to men. Father: into this one word the whole Gospel contracts and coils itself up, and from this it expands and issues forth. Every principle of its teaching we see flowing from one central source, this all-comprehensive truth, God's fatherhood. To Jesus God and Father were synonymous; Father is his one name for God—you will find he never calls Him by any other; but it is not a question of texts, the fatherhood of God is the very atmosphere and climate of the Gospel. And it is not an aspect or an "attribute" of God, but constitutive of His being. His revelation of God Jesus brings to us enshrined in the earliest relationship we know, yet we shall miss the truth if we take it that the fatherhood ascribed to God has a merely figurative significance. Rather is the term father but a figure when applied to any other. God does not borrow from earth, but lends to it in human fatherhood a simile and suggestion of His own, a shadow of the eternal substance. God is not *like* a father, He is Father absolutely. He alone is the Giver of life, of physical life through nature's instrumentalities, of spiritual life distinct

<sup>1</sup> Hosea xi, 1; Jer. xxxi, 9; Isaiah lxiii, 16.

but inseparable from His own, for "in Him we live and move and have our being." In that secret communion with God which led Jesus to say, "no man knoweth the Father save the son" his heart discovered that an eternal kindness watches over human life, an eternal compassion is poured upon its struggle and its sorrow. If the people trembled before a God inexorably pitiless, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, Jesus saw the Divine long-suffering following anxiously the sinner's wayward course, and the Divine consolation bending to the cry of the troubled hearts of men. Such a new idea of God brought with it an entirely new idea of religion, and made an end of Judaism. If God be hard and severe, then it must be the effort of religion to conciliate Him. There must be sacrifice for sin, ascetic practices and scrupulous obedience to the letter of an elaborate law. But if God is a Father, then the only religious duty is to love him with the heart of a child responsive to a father's love; for God loves men because they are His children, and not on account of their religious performances. And because He is their Father they are to give Him obedience, not from hope of reward or fear of punishment.<sup>1</sup> We see then the meaning of the saying, "Whosoever will not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he cannot enter therein." It is one of many that exalt childhood with its natural inclination to reverence, trust and love, as a type of the character befitting the human children of God. With childhood in its smiling innocence and gladness Jesus was peculiarly sympathetic. When we see

<sup>1</sup> "Where remained any necessity for sacrifice, for the temple service, washings, fasts, tithes, if the Father asks nothing from His children save the heart? Where remained the Rabbi's hope of keeping God to the fulfilment of His promises according to contract? Where remained the exceptional position of the Jews and their claims to be the chosen people? One part of the theocracy after another collapsed, for its foundations had given way." Hausrath, *The Time of Jesus*, ii, 148.

him taking little children in his arms, we feel that he is among those of like nature with himself. For the Child lived in the Man: with all a man's heroic courage, with all his force and fire of intense earnestness, there dwelt the freedom and freshness of an entirely unspoilt and simple heart, resting in happy trustfulness on the Father's love.

It follows from the new idea of God that the coming of the Kingdom would be the winning of such a quality of soul as puts men in true relations with Him; and this is the theme of the first group of Sayings (Logia) in the gospel of Matthew. The first step toward renovation of the elements of character must be a sense of dissatisfaction with one's present self, a sense of want or penury. Therefore "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven,"—rather than theirs who trust in themselves that they are righteous. Then comes the further step: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled"; or blessed is the eager aspiration to the moral ideal, the intense longing for inward goodness, for it shall be satisfied. And would we know the traits of this goodness: Blessed are the mild, the merciful, the pure in heart, blessed are they that work for peace on earth; yet not peace by the surrender of principle: "blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

In these Beatitudes we have what Neander called the Magna Charta of the Kingdom of God. These inward dispositions of the soul, and such as these, are the keys of the Kingdom, the requisites for admission. And these are all that is required. There is no mention of the confession of a creed, or participation in ritual observances, or deference to ecclesiastical authority; the qualities of character whose possessors are called blessed are enough to fit them for the Kingdom, to assure their eternal life, their salvation. A dogmatic creed, the creation of the

Christian religion, was indeed something unknown to Judaism, but that religion was essentially a matter of ritualistic practices. In old Israel centuries earlier the question whether the chief concern of religion was with righteousness or ritual had arrayed the prophet against the priest in a long contest that ended in the triumph of the priestly conception of religious duty as consisting mainly in the performance of liturgical rites rather than in the consecration of life. Even the prophet of the Jordan was not able to free himself from the influence of the dominant formalism, and though preaching a religion of the simple moralities—honesty, purity, and kindliness, at the same time imposed his rite of baptism as a necessary sign and seal of qualification for entrance into the messianic kingdom. This was only to replace the formalism of the Pharisee with a formalism of his own, and he seemed for a moment to become aware of the inconsistency that compromised his work of reform when he met the Pharisees, who came to him, with the hot words: “Brood of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” He saw that in asking to be baptised they were merely following their ordinary procedure of seeking salvation by external practices; it was possible then for one to be in the number of his disciples without any moral amendment. Pharisaism he well knew for a parade of piety to be seen of men. It is because he made religion an unreality, a sham, that the term inseparably associated with the Pharisee is hypocrite—play-actor. It was inevitable that the attitude of the Prophet of Nazareth should raise again the old issue between outward form and inward spirit, and he met it squarely. The Sabbath rest, which Deuteronomy places on humanitarian grounds, had become a barren taboo among the Jews, and Jesus swept away the senseless and vexatious restrictions its strict observance imposed by that declaration of supreme common sense: “The



Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; Therefore man is lord of the Sabbath."<sup>1</sup> This was to call on men to exercise their own moral judgment and free themselves from bondage to the rule of tradition, and this implication did not escape the Prophet's adversaries. It was his persistent Sabbath-breaking that alarmed the Pharisees and led them to take counsel against him how they might destroy him. (Mark iii, 6.)

Again, when certain Scribes and Pharisees, coming spying upon him from Jerusalem, took offence because his disciples "ate bread with defiled—that is to say, unwashed—hands," neglecting the elaborate ceremonial of ablution prescribed by the tradition of the elders, Jesus turned on them in indignation, denouncing their

<sup>1</sup> The Aramaic word for man is a compound word and "son of man" means man and nothing more. The early Christians took it for a messianic title, and therefore it would be supposed that in these words Jesus was claiming the Messiah's prerogative to supersede the law. This is inconsistent with the argument of the text, which makes the lordship of the Sabbath the consequence of the Sabbath being made for man, and it is at variance with the whole tenor of the synoptic narrative in which there is no mention of any messianic claim on the part of Jesus prior to the journey to Jerusalem.

The difficulty as to the meaning of the title "Son of Man," so frequently recurring in the Synoptics is wholly due to an unfortunate mistranslation of the Aramaic phrase. For that is what it came to when *bar nasha* was translated literally "the son of man," instead of "the man," as would be the rendering in idiomatic Greek, and which in English would be simply man,—as man is English for *l'homme*. The passages in the gospels where this term appears in a messianic sense cannot be regarded as belonging to the oldest tradition, but point clearly to a derivation from the apocalyptic terminology and the "dogma-building consciousness" of the early church. Pfleiderer concludes a discussion of this question in these words: "So much I hold to be certain, that all sayings with which the use of the title Son of Man as a messianic self-designation is connected are not derived from Jesus himself, since this self-designation cannot possibly be supposed to be used by him." *Primitive Christianity*, ii, 475-482.

For an exhaustive treatment of the subject, coming to the same conclusion, see Schmidt, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, Ch. v, and the same writer's article *Son of Man* in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*.

formalism, or "hypocrisy," and their tradition that "made void the word of God." And then he called the people to him and said: Listen to me every one of you and understand: nothing that enters into a man from without can defile him, but only that which comes forth from the man—the evil passions and purposes that come from within the heart. This he said, comments the Evangelist, "making all meats clean."<sup>1</sup> And this declaration implies the general truth that "there is no religious or moral obligation to avoid what does not defile the soul, or to practise what does not purify the life; and that such avoidance and such practices are neither binding on the conscience nor acceptable to God."<sup>2</sup> It is plain that the whole question of ceremonial purity was disposed of by this principle of inwardness which brings everything to the heart of man for valuation, and that the foundation of the whole system of Jewish externalism was undermined and swept away.<sup>3</sup> That this must be the effect of his Gospel,

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii, 1-23.

<sup>2</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 175.

<sup>3</sup> "When we examine the relation of Jesus to the Jewish law we shall do well to leave on one side the statement in the Sermon on the Mount, 'I am not come to destroy but to fulfil' and simply look at the facts. That statement belongs to the age after Paul and is intended to formulate the result of the struggles of the apostolic age from the early Catholic standpoint. One reason is sufficient to show that it cannot be ascribed to Jesus, for its form betrays a theologian for whom the question, 'destruction or fulfilment' of the law implied a problem to be solved." Wernle, *Beginnings of Christianity*, i, 88.

It is plain at any rate that the two following verses (Matt. v, 18-19) come from a Judaizing source, and the reprehension of those who "shall teach men so" can only refer to the Paulinists. Removing these two verses there appears a close connection of 17 with 20: I come not to destroy but to fulfil—or complete. For I say unto you that except your righteousness exceed, etc.; and then follows the showing of what is meant by "exceeding" or "completing." While thus it may be possible to save v, 17; Wernle is probably right in rejecting it. The saying "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" expresses the attitude of the Church which looked on Christ as the giver of the "new law," who had not done away with the old, but rather fulfilled it through amplification and a deeper interpretation.

that it was irreconcilable with Judaism and destructive of it, Jesus plainly intimates in two parabolic sayings whose significance extends beyond reference to the special occasion of their utterance. The Baptist had not only introduced a new rite but adopted an old "practice." When his disciples came to Jesus saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" he answered them (according to Luke): No one patches an old garment with a piece from a new one, for that is to tear up the new garment, and after all the new will not match the old; and no one puts new wine into old skins, for it will burst the skins and be spilled.<sup>1</sup>

But what of the moral law? To some of the Prophet's hearers the teaching of the Beatitudes must have seemed vague and in the air; to leave out all insistence on the regulation of conduct was to make things all too easy. Jesus tells them that the inward goodness is harder as well as higher than any outward rectitude, and his demands more rigorous than those of the Pharisaic moralist: "I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven." It seemed impossible to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees with its strict and searching regulation of men's minutest actions, but the new righteousness will "exceed" by a

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ix, 14, 17; Mark ii, 18, 22; Luke v, 33-39.

"So far as regards the special case of his disciples, Jesus answered that for them in their present mood of joyful exaltation fasting would be as unreasonable as for the friends of the bridegroom on the marriage day. That is the simple sense of the image in Mark ii, 19, which is not to be allegorised as if Jesus intended to represent himself as the bridegroom of his people, *i.e.* as the Messiah. But even this Evangelist has interpreted the image as an allegory, and adds: 'But the days shall come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then shall they fast in those days? That is evidently a prediction of his death which is put into the mouth of Jesus, and which in this connection is improbable.'" Pfeleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, ii, 9.



qualitative difference; it is the righteousness that will stand when the depths of the heart are probed. Legal morality begins and ends in outward action; that of Jesus begins and ends in the inner life of the soul. And therefore the one succeeds just where the other fails. It was the vain attempt of legalism to govern the conduct of life in all its manifold details and incidents by rules prescribed for each case that might arise. The Gospel views life as a whole, and for rules it substitutes principles which the free agent finds to be of universal application.

Pharisaism was the full growth of the seed sown by the post-exilic Code.<sup>1</sup> During the centuries of Judaism the ideal of righteousness, the high aspiration of Israel's early day, had dried and stiffened into a tyranny of external law prescribing a traditional routine. Jesus spoke to the heart, out of which are the issues of life. He did not aim at the control of conduct: "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said to them all, Take heed and beware of covetousness." That is, he did not deal with conduct because he dealt with the springs of conduct. For all that we find here and there in the Old Scriptures some intimation of the truth struggling to find expression in prophetic ages, it is fair to say that it was Jesus who discovered and revealed the essential inwardness of righteousness; nothing could be less violent, yet nothing more revolutionary. Law is concerned only with the deed and disregards, for it cannot command, the inward disposition. But this in Jesus' view is everything, for it is this that gives their character to actions. He goes

<sup>1</sup> "There is an unbroken line of descent from Ezekiel through the Code of the priests to the Talmud. The separation of sacred and profane, the preference for the ceremonial, the importance attached to what was morally indifferent, the spirit of exclusiveness, the national fanaticism, were all rooted in the Law. The Law implied the supremacy of the Jewish idea, the petrification of true religion, deadly enmity to the prophetic spirit." Wernle, *op. cit.*, 190.

back of the deed to motives, purposes, desires—back to the man: "Thou blind Pharisee! Cleanse first the inside of the cup and platter, that the outside may become clean also." This is to look on conduct as only a result and indication of a healthy or unhealthy state of soul, and Jesus' effort was to reach the soul. For it is what men are that he cared for, and not merely what they do. If you have the man, you have the deed; we act out what we are. Conduct then is consequential, and may be left to take care of itself: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit."

This going back of conduct to the man was just what Legalism made impossible. It did not allow a man freedom to judge for himself, to order his own goings; that he must surrender into the capable hands of authority. It assumed that men are spiritually blind, and hence at every step in the path of life they must be led and guided by a rule. For law does not attempt to make the will a good will. That men shall do right, or rather not do wrong, is the concern of law; that they shall be good is an effect it does not seek and cannot secure; it could not create good men even if it could compel good deeds. But that too is beyond it; goodness under compulsion is not goodness. If the agent is not allowed to have a will of his own, his action, as not really personal, ceases to be moral. A moral act has significance and value in that it is the utterance, the realisation of the doer's character; but the works of legal righteousness were out of all relation to the character of him who performed them, or rather, the votary of the Law was not allowed to possess a moral character. He was nothing other than a mechanical toy to be wound up and regulated and set going through a round of prescribed actions which were nothing to him, were not really his, and in themselves were for the most part trivial and meaning-

less. In their misguided zeal for righteousness, whose effect was to quench the light of moral intuition, to deaden the conscience, to proscribe the freedom that makes one man and the manhood that makes one free, the Masters in Israel carried the principle of authority in religion to a logical extreme not reached elsewhere in the history of mankind.<sup>1</sup> This authority Jesus attacked and defied. He warned his disciples to beware of the "leaven of the Pharisees." He insisted that men must judge of themselves what is right, that knowledge of right and wrong was not to be derived at second hand from others, but from the inner light, the eye of the soul. He proclaimed a religion of the spirit more free, confident, and daring than the world has ever been willing wholly to accept.<sup>2</sup> His Gospel was the rescue of enslaved individuality; his word of power set wide the doors of the prison house where spirit had languished for centuries in bonds.

Of course the Jew regarded his Law as the declared will of God, but God had fallen into the background of his

<sup>1</sup> "The province of law is to order the relations of men to one another according to fixed standards. Its object is not the individual, but civil society as a whole, and its application to individual life is a fatal error. For if external constraint is of the essence of law, freedom is the essential condition of moral action. To be moral action it must spring from internal motives; its regulation by external standards is a stifling of moral life in its very principle," Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, Div. II. Vol. ii, 93-94.

The above, it will be seen, is not quite a literal quotation.

<sup>2</sup> "It was his great enterprise to transplant his countrymen out of the legal into the evangelic religious relation, and so to spiritualise the standard of life. And we hold this to be, next to monotheism, the greatest step ever taken in the development of religious thought; enough, however imperfectly apprehended, to account for all that followed in the wake of his teaching, for all the influence of Christianity upon human life." Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 173.

"The sovereignty of the Law Jesus destroyed for his disciples. He opened up a new world to them; he built a new foundation for their life. They belonged not to the Law but to God Himself in an inner union which aid claim to the whole man." Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age*, ii., 343.

view and the Law stood forth alone, an abstract supreme authority; according to the Rabbis God Himself devoted his leisure hours on the Sabbath to its study. The Gospel condemns this idolatry of Law. It is not a Law to which we owe allegiance. The moral law is simply the indicator of right and wrong, the standard and rule of action—as a pair of scales is an instrument for measuring weight. When you give short weight to your neighbor, that is an offence against him—not against the scales. You owe no duty to the scales. And we owe no duty to an impersonal law. We cannot speak, except in metaphor, of the authority of a law or command; the authority belongs to the person who issues the command. It is the Giver of the law to whom we owe allegiance. Duty is a personal relation to the personal God, the bringing our will into accord with His: “Our wills are ours to make them Thine.” And this is freedom, for the divine will, or righteousness, is the true nature of will. “Ye shall know the truth,” said Jesus, “and the truth shall make you free.” Freedom comes with insight of the truth that the law of Right is not an enactment, but an organic law; is not imposed upon us by legislative authority, but reveals itself within us. Since only in doing right the will is free, it is plain that to follow righteousness is to fulfil the law of our being. Law, as obligation, looks beyond itself; its whole truth, or outcome, is autonomy; and this “fulfilment” of law, which is its abrogation, is the transcendence or transfiguration of morality, as that rises from compulsory obedience to the free activity of spirit in voluntary choice, the freedom of self-realisation. Jesus, it is needless to say, did not express himself in this academic style, but this is the truth that underlies the simple language of his teaching.

This Gospel of a spiritual righteousness, so familiar to us but so new and startling to its first hearers, was the fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prediction of the new covenant and

the writing of God's law within men's hearts.<sup>1</sup> Murder and adultery were condemned by the Law, but the sin of either is in the hearts of men,—in the passion of lust or hatred that prompts it. Therefore if one's hand tempt him to offend, let him cut it off, or his eye, let him pluck it out, so that maimed or blind he may enter the Kingdom. Men knew the old law of retaliation, but Jesus gives them a higher law: "I say unto you, Whosoever shall smite thee on the one cheek turn to him the other also." The old law ran, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy, and again Jesus overrides it<sup>2</sup>: "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be children of your Father in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." They who would injure us and do us evil are none the less our Father's children, and brotherhood demands of us a long-suffering affection like the Father's own. This was to reveal a law of love, not measured by justice or desert, but absolute and universal. It was to appeal to human nature as susceptible of being moved by influences divinely magnanimous and tender, and at the same time as native to the better part of man as the light he sees by or the air he breathes. And so comes the climax: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." That sublime exhortation kindles an aspiration toward an infinite ideal that cannot rest content in any righteousness attained. It tells us we pursue a flying

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah, xxx, 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> It is objected that the Law had no command to hate the enemy, but the "neighbor" of Lev. xix, 18, is plainly one of "the children thy people." To him the duty of love was restricted; it did not extend to the stranger who was always an enemy and an object of hatred in the view of primitive society; and hence it appears that Jesus was justified in his interpretation of the Law.



goal. The region of man's duty cannot be enclosed by fixed enactments; it has no finite boundary; the moment our performance overtakes what we ought to do, and that demand ceases to be the incitement that leads us on, at once a new one rises before us calling us to follow, and warning us never to suffer any height they reach to arrest our climbing feet.<sup>1</sup> Human life is this strenuous striving of a spiritual energy,—doing the good only to see the better, and seeing the better only to attempt it, for “he who ceases to become better ceases to be good.” “So build we up the being that we are.” Though here we cannot reach divine perfection, we live by loving it and striving toward it, and because it transcends our achievement it secures our continual endeavor, and shines before us as the image of that into which we are to grow forever, the end for which man was created.<sup>2</sup>

These wonderful words of Jesus only emphasize the great truth involved in his teaching of God's Fatherhood which he was trying to make men rise to and take in: that is, the homogeneity of spirit, the unity in nature of God and man. His revelation of God is one with his revelation of man: each of these carries the other with it. “The whole of Jesus' message may be reduced to these two heads—God the Father, and the human soul, so ennobled that it can and does unite with Him” (Harnack). To say that God's Kingdom is within us comes very near to saying that God Himself is within us, and when we pray to Him it is not to One far off or a stranger; it is our higher nature in its weakness communing with our higher

<sup>1</sup> “I count not myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do: forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal, unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

<sup>2</sup> That aspiration rather than achievement is the measure of the excellence that is distinctively human is an idea that finds reiterated expression in Browning's poetry, as all his readers know.



nature in its perfect strength. And so when Jesus tells the people not to worry over meat and drink and raiment, but trust the Father who knows their needs, it is that they shall give themselves to one thing only: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Seek God's righteousness: here we have in its full meaning the righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. A goodness of one's own, inward, free, spontaneous—a goodness the same in kind as God's, however infinitesimal in degree, that is the latent capacity of the divine life in the souls of God's children. This capacity Jesus appealed to. What he aimed at was the birth of the spiritual man in the man of sense. It was spiritual life in its free activity that he sought to call into being.

And so what he had to do was not merely to teach men but to inspire them. And his teaching in itself was inspiration.<sup>1</sup> The friends of Jesus are called his disciples, but he was not properly a teacher. He had no theological doctrine to impart; he was not regarded as a Scribe, more enlightened than the others. He was concerned with facts rather than theories, with life rather than thought, and he spoke not so directly to the intelligence as to the conscience and the heart. His constant aim was to create a new religious life in the souls of his followers, to inspire them with his own faith, with the light of his own consciousness and the spirit of his own inner life. He told the method of his teaching in a parable. He was the sower who went forth to scatter his seed, as it were blindly but with full hands, alike on the trodden way, in rocky places, among thorns and on fertile soil. If much were wasted, still the sowing would not be without effect. We should

<sup>1</sup> I need not dwell upon the inimitable charm of its simplicity and beauty, its vivid and illuminating play of fancy, the variety of tone adapting itself to varying occasions and the differences in men, for all this many eloquent writers have impressed upon us.

note the exactness of the figure. All Jesus' teaching was *seminal*; it was suggestive rather than didactic, it pointed out the direction in which the disciple was to find his own way. All his sayings were left open, free, and fluent for the hearers to grasp and to interpret. And none so abounds in metaphor, hyperbole, and paradox, for his terse and pregnant utterances are framed to seize the attention and set men thinking, to open their eyes to truth, to rouse the sleeping conscience and pierce the hardened heart. They are not imposed on his hearers, they appeal to them; "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." They do not lay down a new law, but seek to waken the life which no law can give. They are not to be taken in the letter—of that the speaker often seems careless. Literalists who mistake this teaching for a code of practice tell us it is impracticable and of little value for modern life. But it is owing to this teaching that modern life is what it is. All that is best in it is the development of what Jesus gave the world in germ; the vital principles he sowed broadcast have borne fruit a hundredfold, and the moral world we live in is his work. For his sayings were planted so deeply in the hearts of men that they fixed themselves there as seeds of life, and thorns that have grown up with them have not choked them. Their definite gnomic expression the ingenuity or dulness of theologians has never been able wholly to obscure, and under all the weight of misconception and perversion, of contradictory teachings, which the ages have piled upon them, they have remained a permanent regenerative power—like the wheat found in Egyptian tombs which still retains undiminished the capacity of germination wherever it falls upon good ground.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Auguste Sabatier writes thus of Jesus' teaching: "Il ne sert que d'images, de jeux de mots, de paradoxes, de paraboles, de toute forme d'expression qui prise à la lettre est bien la plus inadequate du monde, mais

The world has known many teachers of ethics, but Jesus is not one of them. Ethics may be called the science of life; one who is instructed in ethics knows how he ought to live. Such knowledge is not difficult to acquire, but it is not very valuable. "The object of systems of morality," said Matthew Arnold, "is to take possession of human life and to establish it in the practice of virtue by prescribing to it fixed principles of action, fixed rules of conduct. Thus human life has always a clue to follow and may always be making way toward its goal." If only the matter were as simple as that! Human life has scarcely justified this innocent confidence in rules and regulations. Portia is a better moralist: "If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. I can easier tell twenty what were good to be done than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching." The truth is, life, as an affair of practice, is rather an art than a science, and in all art the first thing is power—power of soul. It is the energy of creative genius, and not careful adherence to fixed rules, that lifts art work above mediocrity. It is the same with the art of living. And so even if prescribing a rule were enough to secure its control of

---

qui est en revanche la plus vivante et la plus excitatrice. Chacune de ses sentences est comme revêtue d'une écorce rude; c'est une noix qu'il faut casser. Jésus voulait forcer ses auditeurs à interpréter ses paroles parce qu'il les appelait à une activité autonome et personnelle. Encore aujourd'hui celui qui ne se livre pas à ce travail d'assimilation et d'interprétation en lisant l'Evangile, celui qui ne perce pas à travers les paroles jusqu'à l'âme, et de la lettre ne remonte pas jusqu'à la conscience intime du Maître, ne saurait comprendre son enseignement ni en profiter."

And this may be added from Albert Réville:

"Comme caractère générale de sa doctrine elle est surtout remarquable par son principe et par sa tendance. Elle n'est pas une chose arrêtée stéréotypée, elle se fait, elle devient. Elle part du Judaïsme, le nie parfois formellement, le modifie souvent indirectement, le dépasse toujours. Le point de départ est fixe, la tendance constante, le point d'arrivée visible, bien qu'il ne soit pas toujours énoncé."

conduct, that would not mend the matter. There are many to whom the morality of custom is not grievous; they find it not too difficult to live by the conventional rule, to conform to the proprieties; they are satisfied to be respectable and to escape the responsibility of personal action by going with the crowd. The average man is disposed to follow precedent, to recognize existing standards of judgment, to adopt the prevalent opinions, to imbibe the prejudices that the world calls principles—in a word to live in accordance with the views and sentiments that acquire the sanction of society because they are those of average men. The trouble is, this is not really living at all. Life means spontaneous initiative, and it is this that distinguishes vitality from mechanism.<sup>1</sup>

Jewish society in the time of Jesus was the most finished conventionalism the world has seen, even in the unchanging East, where custom and tradition are invested with a binding sacredness. Men were bound down and hedged in on every side. They “moved in orbits calculated before they were born.” It was all arranged in minutest detail how they were to live—to think and speak and feast and marry and fast and pray. Subservience to the conventional uniformity lay with leaden weight on the heart of the people, and suppressed in the individual all that was distinctively his own. This it was that Jesus sought to rescue, the separate personal being of each man. He spoke direct to the individual soul, roused it from its inertia, drew it out, as it were, from the mass of men in which it was swallowed up and lost, and taught it a sense of its own infinite independence through its own direct dependence upon God. He held to a belief in the inherent ability of men to respond to appeals to the heart and conscience. He trusted all to the

<sup>1</sup> “If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law.”

better part of man and its native affinity with the right and true. When he commends the "faith" of those who welcome his preaching, what he means by that is a union of mental candor and moral simplicity; not an unreasoning credulity, but that openness of mind, freedom from prejudice, and readiness to receive new truth which are qualities essentially reasonable. And he urged men to use their power of discrimination between false and true, right and wrong, and they would find the power grow by use, as it is lost by disuse (Mark iv., 23-25). His hearers learned for the first time that they had faculties and responsibilities of their own. Jesus' object too, like that of the systems of morality, was to "take possession of human life," but it was not by prescribing rules that he endeavored to attain it.<sup>1</sup> His way was to inspire, rouse, energise, transform, the individual soul. "I am come that they may have life," he said, "and have it more abundantly." The follower of Jesus was to be a real man and not a marionette, was to live his own life and not be dependent on the movement of the social mechanism. And to live abundantly means the full activity of the personal energies, the quickened intensity of the higher powers of the soul.

To this abundance of life Jesus would commit its guidance. The aim of his positive morality was not so much the suppression of the lower nature as the lifting of the higher nature into fellowship with the eternal Goodness, and therefore he baptised with fire. The Stoic called on reason to suppress the passions that he feared and shunned; his ideal was a passionless tranquillity. Yet passion—eager, ardent desire—is the one great motive power; without passion, it has been said, nothing great was ever done on earth. Jesus trusted all to this

<sup>1</sup> "Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. . . . But if ye are led by the spirit ye are not under the law."



ardor of the soul. He sought to overcome the evil passions of men by rousing a more powerful passion which should make his followers enthusiasts for goodness: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted and divideth his spoils." The principle of inward righteousness lays all stress upon the motive of the deed and the disposition of the doer. If then it be asked, what shall be the one all-ruling motive of human conduct, and what the constant disposition of the soul, obviously the answer is, it is love to God and to man. Ages of oppression had taught the Jews to hate all Gentiles: the Romans found their salient characteristic to be their "hatred of the human race." No chains can bind and subdue that strong passion; it must be driven out by a stronger than itself that enters as a conqueror the palace of the soul. Therefore, "I say unto you: Love your enemies!" For love is a mighty power, like the faith that removes mountains, and with love as with God all things are possible.

Gentiles and Samaritans were not the only objects of the Jew's hatred; it was part of his religious duty to hate and despise the lawless, loose-living "people of the land" ('Am ha' arets). It was a leading note of Jewish piety to hold oneself carefully aloof from sinners. Legal purity could only maintain itself by avoidance of all contaminating intercourse with people of vicious life, or with the publicans, the excommunicated, the ceremonially unclean. In the eyes of the Pharisees the mass of the people, unschooled in the Law, were under a curse. A knowledge of all the minute rules and ordinances of the Law, with its 613 precepts and prohibitions, and those of the Tradition still more numerous, was the pride of these trained virtuosos of piety, but such a knowledge was not attainable by



the average man, with his living to make, and still less an accurate performance of all that was required; and so, shunned and banned by the pious, the "sinners" were left to shift for themselves in body and soul, and such is the demoralising effect of social condemnation that it is likely many of these constructive sinners were actually nothing less. The quick sympathy of Jesus was touched by the forlorn condition of this outcast populace. "When he saw the multitude he was moved with compassion for them because they were distressed and wandering, as sheep not having a shepherd." At sight of this maltreated and leaderless mass he felt the call of the old prophet to preach good tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to set at liberty those that were bound (Luke iv, 16 *seq.*). He sought men everywhere, in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and at their work on weekdays. He invited their confidence, he entered their houses, he sat by the bedside of the sick and at the table of the publican. He wanted to bring these people to God, not to the dim view of a King magnificently distant, but to the presence of a Father close at hand in every hour of their daily life. Good or bad, these men and women were his brothers and sisters. If the sinners despaired of themselves they should see that he had faith in them; if they had lost their self-respect he would give it back to them by his readiness to meet them on equal terms; if they were sullen, hard, embittered, he would go to them as a friend and by his frank kindness win them to a better mood.<sup>1</sup> Nothing was nearer to his heart than this ministry of redemption. When the Baptist sent from his prison to ask, Art thou

<sup>1</sup> "His sense of the worth of every human personality, his tender treatment of the bruised and wounded spirit, his delicacy in dealing with the tattered fragments of humanity, his reverence in the devastated shrine, characterised the spirit that is needed to lift mankind again." Schmidt, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, 381.

he that should come, or look we for another? he told the messengers to report what they had seen and heard of him, and how the prophecy was fulfilled (Isaiah xxxv, 5-6) and now the spiritually blind gained vision of the Divine, the deaf were brought to hear the voice of God and the dumb to speak His praise, the lame found strength to walk in the path of righteousness, the moral lepers were cleansed, the dead in sin were raised to new life, and the poor had the good tidings preached to them. And happy is he, added Jesus, who does not take offense in me.<sup>1</sup> That happiness was not for the Pharisees. They were frankly shocked at the behavior of the friend of sinners, the solicitude and sympathy he showed for the profligate and outcast; and we can imagine their horror when later in Jerusalem he faced them with the bold words: "I say unto you, the publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you." He met their protest with his parables of the Tares and the Dragnet, declaring that the separation of the wicked from the righteous was not man's work but God's.<sup>2</sup> To their murmurs at his scandalous intimacy with the reprobate he replied: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Above all he held up to them in more than one touching picture the eagerness of the Divine Heart to reclaim the sinner and forgive his sin. So far as these parables were addressed to Pharisees Jesus was casting pearls before swine, and they were quick to trample them under foot and turn

<sup>1</sup> The faith-cures of Jesus were merely an incident of his ministry whose importance has been immensely exaggerated, as their character has been transformed by the passion for the marvellous which prevailed in his day. It is plain that he strove to minimise the effect of these works of healing on the popular mind, for they diverted attention from his real work, his preaching the Gospel of the spiritual life.

<sup>2</sup> In after days these parables were taken to refer to the Kingdom of God, for this had become identified with the Church. But the presence of the wicked in the Kingdom of God is in direct contradiction with Jesus' idea of it as essentially a Kingdom of spiritual goodness.

and rend him; but the truth they tell is the one sinners need first to know. The Jewish terror of sin had become a haunting, paralysing nightmare; we know how it weighed on the heart of Paul. Jesus lifted this burden from the souls of men by his revelation of the heavenly Father's love; this was to place the relation of sinful man to God, not upon a new footing, but in a new light. And if sinners were to come to that light, come to feel the unchanging love of God which is His very nature, it must first be shown them as forgiveness, blotting out as a cloud their transgressions for His names' sake. The cloud intercepts the sunlight till it is pierced and scattered by the sun. Sin is estrangement from God, and His forgiveness is reunion. A child disobeys his father: he feels that he has done wrong, that the wrong has somehow separated him from his father, and in that sense of separation he is troubled, restless, unhappy. He knows in a general way that his father is good and kind; what he needs to know is that his father is ready and anxious to forgive him as soon as he can—as soon as the child will let himself be forgiven. And this is the message of Jesus. God is our Father, and whenever we do wrong, if we are sorry for it and tell him so, He will always forgive us, as any father forgives his child. This forgiveness does not relate to penalty; it is the remission of sin, the cleansing us from our unrighteousness. It breaks down the barrier of guilt which has shut us out from God and shut us in to our self-reproach and fear, and brings us back to the cordial union with the Father which is the peace that passeth understanding. And, as Jesus tells us in his story of a father and a son, the ground of the Divine forgiveness is the Divine Fatherhood—a Fatherhood that goes deeper than our sin. The sinful soul is still the soul of the Father's child. Nothing a man does can annul the relation in which he has his being. He can make himself a bad son; he cannot unmake his son-

ship. And though we lose at times our hold upon this truth, God never does, and always if we will our way is open to return to Him. For His forgiveness is nothing else than his constant readiness to welcome all true repentance, and hence it is given freely and without condition. Jesus tells us, with that accent of certainty and confidence which stamps all his utterances, that God's love is free to us as the common air we breathe, and firm as the earth we walk upon. This forgiving love is not something called into being by any act of ours, or of any other in our behalf; it is now and has been always original, primordial in the relation of God with man. Deeper than our sins, more ancient than our being, love is the very nature of God Himself and guaranteed by the divine immutability. That our heavenly Father's forgiveness is to be had for the asking, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, that God Himself is our Saviour, unweariedly seeking his lost child until He finds him—this is what we read in the beautiful fifteenth chapter of St. Luke. And I cannot but think that one day posterity will marvel that in this vital matter so many generations of divines have taught persistently that other "gospel" of St. Paul which rejects and contradicts this teaching of Jesus, so simple, so profound, and so exhaustive.

This, I say, is the first thing the sinner needs to know, that the overcoming of sin brings its effacement, or forgiveness, that sin renounced is sin abolished, that when a man repents and forsakes his sin it is as though it had not been. The past then cannot claim us, cannot bind us in its fetters. With this comes relief from the paralysing depression that weighs upon the heart. If we will break with our past, will turn from evil to good, nothing stands in our way. For sin only exists within us by our acquiescence, and the sole obstacle to our deliverance lies wholly in ourselves—not in God, who is "faithful and just" to

blot out the sin we cast off and leave behind us. That is all we have to do, break free from the sin that holds us, and the way is clear for a daily renewal of our lives.

Let us turn for a moment to another aspect of forgiveness, another truth concerning it, which may be found in the story of the healing of the paralytic in Mark ii, though it is apt to escape notice. Jesus said to the sick of the palsy: "Son, thy sins are forgiven," and when the Scribes protested, "who can forgive sins but God only," he offered them the evidence of the marvellous cure, "that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Pfeiderer has this comment on these words<sup>1</sup>:

The Son of Man here signifies no more than Man: it is the literal translation of the Aramaic *barnasha*, the standing expression for "Man"; and herein lies the point of Jesus' words, namely, that forgiveness of sins takes place not only at God's throne of judgment in heaven, as the Jews supposed, but that man on earth is authorized to manifest the divine will of love not only in healing sickness, but also in the forgiveness of sins. A reference to the Messiah would only obscure the significant force of this saying, and would besides have been quite unintelligible to his opponents; that on the other hand the saying was understood by his hearers with reference to man in general is shown by the conclusion of the narrative in Matt. ix, 8: "They praised God who had given such power unto men."

To refer Jesus' declaration to the Christian Messiah, the Divine Christ, would not only obscure but destroy its significance. To hold the speaker divine is to agree with the Scribes, to admit that it was an altogether superhuman power that he claimed; and it is just this that Jesus denies. The power to forgive sin, he tells us, is one inherent in humanity. We all know the occult force of personality,

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Christianity*, ii, 8.



the influence of one strong human soul upon another to brace and quicken the energy of will; we know how one can turn a brother from his evil way and bring him back to goodness, can redeem him from the power of sin and renew a right spirit within him. And this is to assure him that he is forgiven.<sup>1</sup> It is for us to cultivate and exercise it that this power is given unto men; it is the key that opens the Kingdom of Heaven to the sinner. Such changes came with time and the pristine inspiration so waned and weakened, that the remission of sin degenerated into a sacerdotal rite; but to wash away a brother's evil past, to uplift the fallen and set their feet in the path of right, everyone is a priest. "The works that I do ye shall do also," was Jesus' saying, and it means above all that we have our part to do in taking away the sin of the world. Let a man have something of his spirit, his key to the sinner's heart, the love of man which is one with faith and hope in man, and he will hear a call to go forth with a brother's heart and a brother's hand to seek and save the lost. In the early days when the words of Jesus were warm and living in men's hearts, we read of their confessing their sins one to another and forgiving one another as God had forgiven them. And this is the meaning of that acted parable in the fourth gospel, their master's washing of the disciples' feet. It has been taken for a teaching of humility, but consider in what a solemn and impressive way the incident is introduced and what deep import is assigned to it (John xiii, 1-10). "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them

<sup>1</sup> "Jesus affirms that man has the power to pardon sins. This thought finds expression again when he enjoins upon his disciples to exercise this authority, this blessed privilege of assuring their fellow-men of the pardon of their sins, when their disposition should justify them in doing so. (Matt. xviii, 18). This simple assurance of forgiveness, flowing from a living faith in a heavenly Father's love, was to Jesus no sacerdotal act. Any man had a right to do it." Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 107.



unto the end. . . . If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me"; and then, "he that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet,"—which will be soiled as he comes from the bath. The forgiving love of God cleanses the penitent from sin, but when he steps forth from that bath upon the dusty floors of the house of life he will need to seek forgiveness again and again for the faults and failings that human weakness cannot escape. Then follows the concluding admonition: "If I, your lord and master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

To return from this digression: Taken rightly, as precedent condition of our own exertions, belief in divine forgiveness is part of our moral education; it brings heart and hope to the climbers on the rugged upward path. For this is the next thing we have to tell the sinner, that while the infinite placability of God removes all obstruction in man's way to a better life, He leaves the attainment of it in man's own hand. Deliverance from evil is a process of self-extrication, of self-redemption. Jesus tells the moral paralytic his sins are forgiven, and then bids him arise and walk. Eternal life is not given to us, but gained by us through constancy in effort. "By your endurance," said Jesus, "ye shall win for yourselves souls." That is, souls are not something ready made, but something we make for ourselves; spirit is a self-creation. And that creation is through self-conquest, for our Self is a self-opposed. We do not live long without learning that the soul is a scene of conflict between good and evil powers, and that the one work of life is to establish that complete dominion of the higher over the lower self which is the freedom of the spirit. For we cannot recognise the presence in us of a higher nature, in germ akin to the divine,

without recognising also the obligation that lies upon us to make it dominate our life. To do this, to renounce one's lower nature and his wilful will, to rise on stepping stones of one's dead self to higher things—that is the labor and the difficulty; for might is not with the right, and in most of us the lower nature is the stronger. And yet the consciousness of obligation implies a power to realise the ideal. To this Jesus appeals; his call comes to our help, waking the soul to new life and rousing it to action. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand": that is not a call to an idle contrition that sits in sackcloth and ashes, but to a radical change in the whole inner man. Turn to God and the good with your whole heart and the massed energy of an undivided will; change, amend your life, it cries, for you can if you will; this *metanoia* is within your power. It is an utterance of despair that "men do not change, they only develop," but in truth it is only in that they can change that men are men. The lower creatures develop under the action of natural laws to which they are subject, but that "man is man and master of his fate"—is man because he is master of his fate—is the witness of the inmost consciousness. Self-mastery gained through a stern self-discipline we recognise as an obligation, and hence however difficult it is always possible. This great Gospel word, *metanoia*, is an appeal to the strong, an inspiration of strength to the weak. In the eyes of Jesus the best that we can be is what we really are. When he speaks of sinners as the sick he tells us that our health, our normal state, is goodness; he tells us that man is not naturally bad but naturally good, since not the "brute inheritance," but that which makes him son of God is his true nature. It is not that, in itself evil, his nature needs to be transformed; rather what it needs is education, or drawing forth—to come to itself.<sup>1</sup> If it be

<sup>1</sup> This was clearly seen by Condorcet who clung to his faith in the Per-

otherwise there is no such thing as sin. If the man who lives in sin is living according to his nature, then he is no longer a sinner. He stands on the level of the brute which cannot sin; for he is but what his nature makes him, and he cannot be blamed for that. Hence it is only the fact that man is by nature righteous that makes his wrongdoing sinful. It may indeed be left to "fools" to "mock at sin," and yet too much has been made of it in past days; the Glad Tidings of Jesus has been sicklied o'er by the morbid conscience of Christendom. To treat sin as an organic element of human nature is the long error of the past which has poisoned the springs of Christian thought. We should know that only goodness has a substantial character and an abiding life; evil is in its nature a negative, as darkness is the absence of light.

And now if what makes the sinfulness of sin is the fact that the true nature of man is righteous, it is this that also makes it possible he should recover from his "sickness," since the natural energies of the spirit, as of the body, work toward recovery. The will to do good, enfeebled though it be by evil habit, still has in itself the potency of a reactive force to repair the waste and decay of soul. To rally and reinvigorate this languid vital force was the work of the Physician of the soul. He took it up with confidence, in the conviction that deep in the heart of every man there lives this power of recuperation, of change, of metanoia.<sup>1</sup> For he looked on men and looked them through. There was a man within the man, in publican and sinner; a better self, stricken down by the worse, it

---

fectibility of Man—his contribution to the generous principles of '89—"with the knell of his own doom sounding full in the ear while he wrote."

<sup>1</sup> "He took for granted that there is a power intrinsic to the soul of man to react against the evil, to disengage itself from the chain by which it binds him and to break that causal nexus by which one sin draws another after it." Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 148.

might be, but not powerless to rise again. It was no weak indulgence he showed the fallen, but the helpful sympathy that sought to lift them up and set them on their feet. He never lost hope in the human will and its power of independent action that makes a man creator of his own moral life. This power, which has always been latent in consciousness, he discovers and evokes, revealing a method of redemption which has always been possible in the nature of things, not an afterthought, not a divine contrivance to remedy a mistake.<sup>1</sup> For Jesus' faith in man was one with his faith in God. The striking thing in his view of "poor human nature" is its steadfast optimism; his magnificent trust in humanity nothing could shake. It is man as he ought to be that is son of God, and he calls on men to become what they ought to be. The severe demands he made on men, his high and difficult standard of discipleship, witness to the high capacities with which he credited humanity.<sup>2</sup> He built his hope upon a spiritual energy in

<sup>1</sup> "Redemption is not a miraculous event, brought about by a super-human mediator between the Godhead and humanity; it is an inner process within the heart of man which always and everywhere repeats itself when the fettered and diseased powers of the soul are freed and healed, when the image of God and the child of God that slumber in everyone are aroused to life, reality, and power." Pfeiderer, *Evolution and Theology*, 103.

<sup>2</sup> In regard to these severe demands a word of explanation seems desirable. We find in the gospels certain passages, such as Matt. xix, 12, xiv, 25-33, xviii, 18-25, with the parallels, where Jesus seems to call for extreme and extravagant renunciations and to countenance the moral ideals of asceticism. This would be to contradict himself. It is plain from the whole tone and spirit of his teaching that he could not have contemplated the possibility that the ascetic practices and penances of later days would claim authority derived from him. His own life was free and open, careless of conventions; he shared men's simple pleasures, and his critics called him a gluttonous man and a winebibber; he taught no cloistered sanctity, but the virtues of the everyday world. The Gospel found its pulpit in the great market place of life, for the light was not given to be put under a bushel.

In fact however there is no contradiction here. It is his own case he has in mind in the passage from Matthew. He made himself a eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake because marriage would have hampered the

all men, however latent it might be and weakened from long disuse, yet powerful enough to free one from the grasp of his baser self. A man's first need is to be encouraged to exert that energy; then, and not before, the lonely human will shall find itself in presence of an Infinite Ally and upheld by a mighty arm on the steep path of the higher life. For it is not that God will not, He cannot save a man until he struggles to save himself. The solemn issues of soul life are placed in our hands. Realising the responsibilities of our spiritual freedom, and treading ever on the brink of hope and fear, the Gospel of Jesus comes to us with a liberating appeal to the oppressed, unquiet conscience to put its trust in the unfailing love of God, and steadfastly to work out its self-regeneration, assured that since this is the Father's will He will lend the work His aid.

That morality is one with religion, that righteousness is the service of God, was the high conviction attained by the prophets of Israel, surpassing the gross ideas of their

---

work to which he was called; and when we think of his great love for children and his high esteem for women—supposed by orientals to have no souls—we see how real was the sacrifice. At the time this gospel was written, ascetic teachings were in the air, and it was easy to give the words of Jesus an ascetic turn: "He that is able to receive it let him receive it." In these words, as in Matt. xix, 21: "If thou wilt be *perfect*" (a quasi-technical term), we find thus early the germs of that double morality, one for the ordinary Christian, one for the monk, which worked such evil in after days.

As for the other passages it is through an unfortunate misunderstanding that these demands are supposed to be addressed to all men under all circumstances, and not rather to a few in a time of crisis. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to attack in its stronghold the all-powerful religion which in Galilee had shut the Kingdom of heaven against men. No bolder or more desperate enterprise was ever planned. It was no work for weaklings. These hard exactions were tests to winnow the fit from the unfit. The men whom Jesus called to "follow him" on this forlorn hope had need of splendid courage, of overwhelming enthusiasm, of a single-minded devotion that would throw everything to the winds which might lure their hearts from the one set purpose, or tie their hands in the supreme endeavor.



early time, which gives them immortal life in the religious history of mankind. This Jesus begins with and develops. He sought to waken a sense of the living bond that unites man to God and goodness. The "life" he brought to men is a changed relationship to God, but the change arises only from men's becoming conscious of the relation in which they have their being. "God and the soul—the soul and its God, there is the kernel of his teaching" (Harnack). We hear in conscience the inward voice of a mysterious guest. If Aurelius could say, "I reverence the God who is within," it is because conscience is in germ a consciousness of God, and morality explains itself as a relation to God, since what is absolutely and essentially divine is goodness. It follows that in his capacity for goodness man is virtually of the divine nature, and the end of his life is to realise this promise and potency, and by striving to be like Him rise to affinity with God: Love your enemies that ye may be children of your Father; be ye perfect even as your Father is perfect.<sup>1</sup>

This, I say, is the heart of the Gospel, that Man and every man is the child of God, that the spirit which we are is one with the Spirit whose we are. It holds within it far reaching issues: the meaning of the authority of righteousness and of the awfulness of sin, the secret of life, the boundless promise of the future. This exaltation of man is the explanation of man. As consciousness rests upon self-consciousness, so that is complete only in religious consciousness—the knowing of self in God, or the knowing of God in knowing self. This organic relation of God and man the Gospel reveals as the primordial fact of the human

<sup>1</sup> "So much stress is laid on the necessity of moral improvement that a spiritual change is frequently regarded merely as a particularly efficacious means of effecting a moral change. The identity of the spiritual life and the moral is emphasised; their difference, and the wider area of the former, tends to be lost from view." Jevons, *An Introduction to the History of Religion*, 344.



condition, but it is a fact to which Christendom has been blind. The great revelation has fallen out of mind and been forgotten, and ideas of the relations of God and man have still been borrowed from thrones of kings and courts of law, while the Church has been busy formulating and fighting over doctrines Jesus knew nothing of, nor would have cared to know. If men came to grasp the full meaning of the words, Our Father, with all that they imply and lead to—the common nature, or the divinity of man, the filial relation and its close intimacy of mutual affection, its unity of will—there would dawn upon them such a vision as it has not entered the world's heart to conceive.

Everything a child has comes from its father; he is the giver of all good things. For the true nature of fatherhood is love, and all true love is the desire to give. It may be bread we give, or sympathy and help, it may be our whole self; but always love means giving, and because He is the universal Giver we know that God is Love. And since the whole nature follows love, the response of our heart to Him who first loved us is the giving of ourselves to Him. All that is good is of Him, and the love of God means love of perfection, self-devotion to all that is highest and best. And in this is our growth into likeness with the Father, for we must inevitably grow like to what we supremely love. There is pathos in that noble saying of a great writer, as of a lost child ignorant of his parentage: "Somewhere there exists perfection, therefore I strive."

And he that loveth God will love his brother also; of the two great commandments the second is not only like the first, but one with it. As the Gospel truth that man is son of God throws a revealing light into the "abysmal depths of personality" and it is only in that light that man can see and know himself, so its corollary is evident. If it is in my essential humanity that my relation to God

subsists, then all men hold the same relation, and men are to one another what that relation makes them. There can be no personal relation to God that does not involve the corresponding relation to men. In our sonship to one Father all of us are brothers. This consciousness that manhood means brotherhood is the centripetal force to social unity and its one living, lasting bond. In every man, because he is a man, we are to see our brother; however degraded he may be, he is our Father's Son. The good God loves all men, and if we love not one another we are unfaithful to our heavenward calling to live as children of our Father and to His supreme requirement of likeness to Himself. And so Love, this great unifying power of brother men, is vital to religion. A devotion to God that remains indifferent to social claims and the needs of brother men is but a spiritual selfishness that loses the soul it seeks to save. The root of all evil in the world is self, therefore love is salvation. When love is the one motive power of life the eternal life is already begun.<sup>1</sup> It is the divine law that self inclusion is suicidal. There is no independent individual; individuality is only sustained through its relations with others; membership in society makes one what he is, and taken out of it he will lose humanity and lapse into the brute.<sup>2</sup> To go out of oneself, to give oneself, to be one with others, is the only way to realise oneself. Thus love reveals itself as the law of our being, and in the life it calls us to we see the fulfilment of the destiny which is linked with our origin—growth unto the perfect man who is a son of God. That this life is not the vain attempt to be something greater and nobler than we can be, history makes evident. The revolution wrought

<sup>1</sup> The picture of the Last Judgment attributed to Jesus in Matt. xxiv, 31-46, though probably not genuine in that attribution, is certainly genuine in its accordance with the spirit of his teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Selkirk on his island had forgotten how to talk, but had learned to catch the wild goat by running it down.

by the first Christians was the work of the new spirit within them. "See how these Christians love one another" is the reported saying of astonished Romans, and if it was not said, it might well have been. Of all the miracles that attested their divine mission none was more impressive than that hymn in praise of Love written by a Jew of Tarsus in the reign of Nero. These words, and those of that beautiful writing we call the first Epistle of St. John, were sealed and ratified by the acts of the Apostles. Their labors and sufferings for their great cause, their ardor of self-devotion, their heroism in danger and death, all certify their genuine discipleship, and witness to their inspiration by the Master.

For all there is in Christian thought and life that has made for the world's uplifting goes back to him.<sup>1</sup> Jesus not only preached the Gospel, he lived the Gospel, and the Gospel is never itself when separated from Jesus. He himself stands behind everything he said. He embodied and exemplified the truths he taught, and what he said took hold on men because of what he was. If he freed and strengthened the weak and wavering will, it was because his disciples gathered courage, not from his words so much as from him, himself. By personal fidelity to his own transcendent ideal he stamped the beauty and the appeal of it upon the companions who afterward spread the story of his life among men, and persuaded them to make it the pattern of their own.<sup>2</sup> His teaching was but the utter-

<sup>1</sup> "Of the debt which Christendom owes to the personality of Christ I need not attempt to speak. Suffice it to say that from highest to lowest, from the most heroic to the most homely, all the good desires and good deeds of Christian men and women have been due (so far as their origin has been distinctively Christian) to the personal influence of the historic Christ, —in other words, to affection for and trust in the friend and guide and master whom the Gospel stories taught men, and still teach men, to know and love." *The Creed of Christ*, 202.

<sup>2</sup> "Glorious as the message was, the dynamite of Christianity lies not in

ance of his own inner life, and his consciousness the seed whence the Gospel springs. Hence it was that his great ideas became luminous to the humblest mind. Always it is the power of personality rather than that of intellect that works momentous changes in the world; and this, it has been pointed out, may be seen in the contrast between the practical influence of Plato and of Mohammed.

As George Eliot tells us:

Ideas are often poor ghosts; they pass athwart us in thin vapor, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they are clothed in a living soul with all its faiths and energies; they breathe upon us with warm breath and look upon us with appealing eyes. Then their presence is a power; then they shake us like a passion; and we are drawn after them as flame is drawn to flame.

So it has been with the thoughts and words of Jesus.

He appealed to his hearers not merely by word of mouth, but over and above this by his superiority to the common weaknesses of men, by his deep tenderness, by his singleness of purpose, by his zeal for the good of others, by his serene confidence in the love of God which no strait or danger could disturb: by all this he stirred imagination, awakened sympathy, roused enthusiasm, and gained for himself the devotion of all who were open to spiritual impressions and sensitive to spiritual nobility.<sup>1</sup>

His spoken teaching the world doubtless would have treasured, as it has the teaching of Socrates, but that

---

it, but in the Master. It was not because Jesus laid down the Golden Rule that he taught the people as one having authority; it was because he himself was a Golden Rule incarnate. It was not because he spoke the Beatitudes that they heard him gladly; it was because his life was a beatitude. It was not because he taught in beautiful parables that they loved him; it was because the spirit of his life touched them with vital inspiration." Crocker, *The Supremacy of Jesus*, 24.

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 57.

alone does not explain the centuries of Christian history. The power of his religion in the world has come from its holding up the type of religious perfection in the person of a man who has walked our earth. Hence the Gospel ideal receives the stamp of concrete reality, of life, and gains the endless power to fascinate and attract which only life and reality can give; and hence it has won the greatest victory of idealism that humanity has known. His life, I say, was an object lesson. It was in his own relation to Him that Jesus showed men the Father, and that intimate union which made God the life of his life he would have men know was open to them all. This son of God declares that we too are sons of God, and every one of us may say with him, "I and my Father are one." And so he in his own person reveals humanity to itself. The Christian consciousness finds its origin in his, and his life, one with the God he revealed, is the creative force of all spiritual life in Christendom. The obscure hints, suggestions, "shadowy recollections" of the religious instinct, which hardly understand themselves, feel after his communion with God, so consciously definite, for their satisfying realisation. What he saw other men have come to see through his eyes; what he felt others have come to feel in the measure of their effort to make themselves like him. Jesus himself has always been the life of his religion. His personality was a magnet more potent than his word, and once to come under its spell was to be his forever. That personality it was that from beyond the grave drew together the scattered disciples and founded a spiritual brotherhood, and in all the life of man none other has left such impress upon the world. Always the faith of his true followers has centred on the personal Jesus, kept warm and living by his presence, and growing feeble and fruitless as it has wandered away from him to theories about him and the doctrines of divines. "As many as



received *him*," writes an Evangelist, "to them he gave power to become sons of God." In truth Jesus *is* his Gospel. He *is* man as he ought to be: "an exemplar vouchsafed in an early age of the world of what man may and should become in the course of ages, in his progress toward the fulfilment of his destiny." He is the realisation of man's potential divinity, "the highest we know or are able to conceive," and "the one towering perpetual miracle of history." He is the man who enters into possession of the freedom and power of the spirit, who achieves a completed personality, and leaves it as the greatest of possible gifts to mankind—greatest because out of the completed personality all other achievements come: leaves it for the goal of the striving of likeminded men in all after time.

In the foregoing I have not been able to consider the teaching of Jesus in detail, its many special themes of moment and interest, but have touched only on the central principles of the Gospel. Of these the implications and applications are manifold and multiform, the range boundless of their bearing upon human life, and such their transforming power that if followed out and acted on the world would be born anew. It was perhaps a sense of the infinitude of the spiritual influence of its divine hero that led to the conclusion of the fourth gospel: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written."



## II

### Messianism

THE "Messianic Hope" as we meet with it in the time of Jesus sprang from roots in the distant past. A conviction of the power and the favor of the national god was common to all early peoples, and with Israel this conviction was exceptionally strong owing to the marvelous interposition of Jehovah on their behalf at the starting point of their history, the Exodus from Egypt. That wonderful divine deliverance left an ineffaceable impression on the people's mind and fostered a confident trust in the god who had shown himself so mighty to save. Moreover their mutual relations were rendered particularly close by an arrangement, or understanding, supposed to have been arrived at between Jehovah and Israel through their great leader acting as their representative. This entente, though it took the name of a covenant, was not strictly held to express reciprocal obligations. That the people ought to observe its terms was acknowledged, but it was viewed as still binding the god although they might fail to do so. For it was prior to the covenant and without imposing conditions that Jehovah had given striking proof of his favor, and it was not to be supposed that his purpose to protect and exalt his people would permit itself to be defeated by any temporary infidelities on their part.

When in the eighth century the higher thought of the Prophets had risen to the monotheistic faith, the notion of a covenant with the national god took the form of belief in a divine election, and Amos proclaimed that the God of the Universe had chosen Israel for his own out of all the nations of the earth. This faith, bringing confidence in their destiny as a peculiar people, protégés of heaven, suffered a rude shock when in later days calamity fell heavily upon the nation. The miserable present seemed to falsify the legitimate expectations of the people, and it was only by throwing themselves with all their souls upon the hope of a better future that their faith in their god could survive. Unless he had in store for them a complete revival of the national fortunes, their faith in him was a delusion. Thus the religion of Israel became bound up with the hope of a golden age to come through some catastrophic manifestation of divine power. The "Day of Jehovah" was to be a day of god-given deliverance, when Israel should see their enemies condemned and punished, and should enter upon an epoch of unexampled felicity. The greater the evils of the time, the more tenaciously devout spirits clung to this hope, and by their confident predictions of a splendid future the prophets sought to sustain the fainting faith of the people. A few however read the signs of the time with clearer eyes. It was his people that Jehovah would judge first of all; he would scourge them for their iniquities, and no multitude of sacrifices would avail to stay his hand. At that time of woe the wicked would be cut off, but a remnant would be saved for the nucleus of a righteous nation of the future. These prophets of doom were justified by the event, and to this we owe the preservation of their oracles, while those of the many Hananiahs were lost. When the blow had fallen and the worst had come, and the exiles felt that the sins of Israel were expiated, the ancient hope

revived among them, but now, with the loftier minds at least, it gained a larger scope. Hitherto the outlook had been bounded by the circumstances of the present and limited to the future of the nation. That the nation should be morally purified, that it should see its enemies destroyed and itself independent and respected, that it should be governed by strong and righteous kings of the Davidic line under whose sway lasting peace and prosperity should be secured,—this was in substance the hope of Israel. Now the vivid intensity of their monotheistic faith gave to the hope of the later prophets the character of a generous universalism. The eye of the seer swept the wide horizon of the world and beheld Israel as it were the elder sister of the nations, and charged with something of parental duty toward them. At her summons the Gentiles would come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising, and their gathering unto Zion would be their acknowledgment of Jehovah's sovereignty over the whole earth. But as the people had failed to respond to the prophetic teaching that their relation to God was dependent on moral conditions—that the divine election was not an act of capricious partiality, but its end was to make of them a nation trained and devoted to righteousness—so now they failed to rise to the prophetic vision and the missionary purpose of their calling, and clung to simple belief in the divine favoritism, their aspirations limited to a great future for Israel alone. This racial egotism gave its character to the national hope that prevailed in Judea after the return from Babylon and when the voice of prophecy had fallen silent. The whole life of the people now became a service to the Law in the hope of future reward. Jehovah had bound himself to bestow prosperity and happiness upon his people on condition that they observed his Law, and their zealous devotion to its ordinances was inspired by eager expecta-

tion of the halcyon days to come. The time came when the divine promises seemed close upon fulfilment, and just then the excitement of hope gained impetus from the message of a new seer. The Book of Daniel, written to rouse the energies of the Jewish people in the struggle against Antiochus, consists of "a sort of his historical romance with an apocalyptic sequel," and by the simple device of antedating its composition it affected to predict events which in the Maccabean age were matters of history; thus the seeming fulfilment of earlier predictions won credit for its disclosure of events yet to come. The effect of these revelations was to lend distinctness and solidity to the vague and variable object of the people's longing by depicting it as the coming of a Jewish world-kingdom which should overthrow and supplant the great monarchies of the day. An irresistible exertion of Jehovah's power would exalt his people to dominion over the Gentiles to the ends of the earth, and the pious dead would rise to share in the glories of the new Jerusalem. This remarkable work made a deep impression upon the mind of succeeding generations and remained a type and pattern for the subsequent apocalyptic literature to which it gave the impulse. It may be remarked that while apocalyptic is not peculiarly a Jewish product, what is peculiar to the Jewish pseudepigraphs is an influence upon the mind of the people such as the deliverances ascribed to Hermes, Orpheus, Pythagoras and the Sibyls never attained. During the century following the appearance of the Book of Daniel several such mystical writings explored farther recesses of the future and added other features to its picture, and finally among these imaginative prognostications a new conception was developed and a new personage introduced upon the scene.

The Messianic Hope, properly so called, appears for the first time in the history of Israel soon after the year

63 B.C. in a writing emanating from the Pharisaic party which for a generation had been at feud with the Hasmonean dynasty. According to the prediction of this "Psalter of Solomon" the Roman power, Jehovah's instrument to drive out the usurpers of the throne of David, shall itself be overthrown by the rightful King of Israel, the Lord's anointed, who will come at the destined hour to free Jerusalem from all foreign oppression, to bring the nations under his yoke and to reign in justice and wisdom over the sanctified people of Jehovah. It is said that he will crush all impious resistance by "the word of his mouth," upon which Schürer remarks: "Notwithstanding such idealism he is represented as quite a worldly ruler . . . as altogether a human king, but endowed by God with special gifts and powers."<sup>1</sup> A careful study reaches the conclusion that up to the Roman period the whole field of the future as it lay in Israel's expectation has no place for such a personage as this. "The original Messianic Hope did not expect an individual Messiah at all."<sup>2</sup> The new Israel is delivered and ruled by God; it is Jehovah himself who fights against the nations, judges the world and reigns on earth. We find the term Messiah used to designate kings, high priests and the priestly rulers of the Maccabean house who had actually received anointment; we find it used as a poetic embodiment of the Davidic royalty, and we find a prophet giving to Cyrus, and Psalmists giving to the people of Israel, the title of Jehovah's anointed, but never does it stand for this coming deliverer of the Psalter of Solomon before the appearance of that book.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*. . . . Sec. Div., vol. ii, 142 and 160.

<sup>2</sup> Schürer, *op. cit.*, Sec. Div., vol. ii, 159.

<sup>3</sup> "Messianism is that fixed social belief of the Jewish people that Jehovah would deliver Israel and erect it into a glorious empire to which a conquered world would be subject. . . . The central and ever present element of



The rôle assigned to its hero is purely political, and this Messianic Hope was cherished only by some fractions of the people until it was greatly modified when in course of time a personal Messiah was taken up into the transcendental eschatology of the later apocalyptic and became widespread among all classes. Yet it was not in accord with the feeling prevalent in those days that a new religious conception should be presented as a novelty, and at once the Scriptures were searched to discover promises of this Messiah, and predictions of his coming were read into the prophecy and poetry of the past. Wherever a hope was expressed of a change in the fortunes of Israel, of victory over enemies, of better things to come, forthwith it was imagined that the author had in mind the Messiah and his reign, and this personage was given a place in pictures of the future which had been drawn without any reference to him. The same method of dealing with the sacred writings was adapted to their uses by the early Christians, and to this day a fixed preconception applies the term messianic to numerous passages which critical investigation conclusively shows to contain no allusion whatever to a Messiah. "The Hebrew Bible," it has been said, "contains no prophecy of the appearance upon earth of such a personage as Jesus of Nazareth; nor does it anywhere predict the coming of such a being as the Messiah of Jewish thought was in the Roman period. . . . Neither was ever dreamed of by the men whose thoughts are revealed in the Old Testament."<sup>1</sup>

---

the 'Messianic Hope' was that of a divinely established deliverance and kingdom. The King was but an accessory and might not figure, except by implication, in one's hope for the nation's future."

Shailer Mathews, *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament*, 3.

Then is it not misleading and a misuse of terms to call this "fixed belief of the Jewish people," or their firm faith in their national God, the *Messianic Hope*?

<sup>1</sup> To establish this proposition would require far more space than I have



Turning now to the Christian Scriptures, we gather from the gospels that belief in the coming of a personal Messiah was widespread among the people at the time to which they refer, and it is their contention that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah who should come. The question to be considered is what was the attitude of Jesus himself toward the popular belief.

The Gospel of Jesus is the revelation of the only centre and foundation of the real life of man; the Christian Religion is the embodiment of men's efforts to apprehend that revelation and to live in its light. It is said that spirit must clothe itself with an embodiment; that, men being what they are, an ideal in naked essence will take little hold upon the world, and if it is to work effectively as a practical power it must realize itself under forms in accord with the requirements of the intellectual and moral conditions of a given time. It may be so, and yet in doing this it pays the price. Ideal truth cannot leave the realm of inwardness and pass into an outer world of modifying circumstance without suffering loss. The Gospel is in its principles so profound and so simple, so intensely vital and so penetrative to the depth of our being, that it could not but lose something of its native purity and power in its apprehension by minds possessed by various preconceptions and in its adaptation to the needs of a popular religious society. In the adjustment of Christianity to the life of the world many things were

---

at command, and for the argument in its support I refer the reader to *The Prophet of Nazareth*, by Prof. Nathaniel Schmidt, chapters iii and iv, whence the above citation is taken. See also Marti, *The Religion of the Old Testament*, 178-179.

There is one important fact that we have to keep in mind in all discussion of the Messianic Hope, a fact which is commonly overlooked, and that is that the Messiah is a mere creation of Jewish imagination and no more a real being than the personages of Greek mythology.

fused with it which lacked affinity with its spirit, and as it took up elements of the world into itself it was itself taken up into the elements of the world. This we may grant was an historical necessity, but that renders it no less calamitous. The reason, or the chief one, why an ideal loses in realisation is the weakness and dulness and perversity of men. The Gospel seeks to lift men up, to recreate them through the revelation of their sonship to God, and coming to men with this high message, men pull it down to their level, cut it to fit their limitations, make it over in their own image; and this is the pitiful thing that takes the imposing name of historical necessity.<sup>1</sup> And if the Gospel underwent distorting modification when it was made into a religion, that is, a creed and a cultus rather than a life, so it was with the Preacher of the Gospel when he was identified with the Jewish Messiah. This too may have been an historic necessity, a belief indispensable to the planting of the Church, since it was the vehicle that brought into the minds and hearts of the earliest converts influences too pure and spiritual to live at first without it. To this Jewish conception of him we owe it that we have any memoirs of Jesus at all, yet its effect had been disastrous in coloring and distorting those memoirs and in clouding and confusing our view of the person, life and work of the real Jesus.

“The Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Here in the heathen capital the Hellenists, driven from the Holy City, were distinguishable from other Jews, for it was seen that they had ceased to observe the Law, and had laid aside their racial exclusiveness. Still, it is not their

<sup>1</sup> “We seek to recur to the pure ideal because it has always been the weakness of humanity to confound the passing with the permanent, the human with the divine, the essential with the adventitious. We seek to strip off that which is adventitious only in order that we may hold the more firmly to that which is essential, as we face the work which Christianity has yet to do.” Moore, *The New Testament in the Christian Church*, 291.

name that tells their separation from their Jewish brethren. It was as "Christians," Messianists, that they were known. This they had kept of the old religion, and it seemed to be the substance of the new. The messianic faith they even amplified and heightened, while the messianic hopes and fancies that possessed them grew more ardent and extravagant than ever. This dominating belief that Jesus is the Messiah gives unity and form to that compilation of detached traditions which we have in the gospel of Mark, and this is the thesis for which the whole gospel is an argument. The story of Jesus moves through the medium of messianism, and his person is enveloped in it from end to end. The Synoptic gospels are not historic records in the modern sense, and they do not fulfil the conditions of biography as we understand it. The gospels were written for the edification of the faithful and as an apologetic for Christianity, above all for the Messiah's death. That Jesus was the Messiah was argued from his resurrection, attested by his disciples, but complete proof could only be furnished by the Parousia, and hence the centre of gravity of the Christian faith was transferred to its eschatology. "The chief interest of the Synoptic writers is eschatological" writes Professor Mathews, and how they re-worked their original material in a messianic sense is shown in detail by this conservative scholar.<sup>1</sup> "The Synoptists did not describe the Jesus of real life, but the Christ as he appeared to the hearts of his followers."<sup>2</sup> They "represent the point of view of the Church during the last quarter of the first century."<sup>3</sup>

"The religious reflection of the early Christian congregations moved entirely in the direction of interpreting and arranging the preceding earth-life of Jesus in the light of

<sup>1</sup> Mathews, *op. cit.*, 224-236.

<sup>2</sup> Julicher, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 371.

<sup>3</sup> Mathews, *ut sup.*

their newly won belief in his heavenly Messiahship."<sup>1</sup> We are forced to recognize that what the traditions about Jesus give us is first of all the ideas and sentiments of those who give us the traditions.<sup>2</sup> The belief of the primitive Church stands between us and Jesus as we read the gospels. The conceptions of the early Christians with regard to the Christ, their notions concerning his death and resurrection, their views of the messianic kingdom and the future world, we gather without difficulty; but how Jesus stood toward these conceptions and views is much less clear. Wernle remarks:

All the thoughts of Jesus concerning the import of his death and the need of it are, as we meet them, thoughts of the primitive community: it is these only that we actually know. Whether it was Jesus who first put them forth is precisely our question.<sup>3</sup>

And the same question arises in regard to the messianic belief. In Matt. xxiv and its parallels we find the Messiah discoursing on the end of the world and his coming in the clouds of heaven, but since the searching criticism of Colani was turned upon these chapters fifty years ago, it has been well established that not one word in them was the utterance of Jesus. As the text betrays by its caution "let him that *readeth* understand," we have to do here with a writing, not a spoken discourse. This "synoptic apocalypse" comes from an Aramaic original, composed during the siege of Jerusalem, and clearly reflecting the experiences of the year 68. It may be the "oracle" to

<sup>1</sup> Pfleiderer, *Christian Origins*, 141.

<sup>2</sup> "Si les idées de Jésus n'ont toujours pas été la règle des conceptions de ses disciples, elles seront au moins la nôtre dans l'appréciation de ces dernières." Reuss, *Histoire de la Théologie Chrétienne* i, 159.

<sup>3</sup> Wernle, *The Sources of our Knowledge of the Life of Jesus*, 157.

which Eusebius refers as inciting the Christians' flight to Pella, but more probably Wellhausen is right in regarding it as a Jewish product, appropriated in a Greek translation to Christian use, and finally incorporated in the gospel of Matthew, in the reign of Trajan, early in the second century, whence it found its way into Mark and Luke. The case against this interpolation is abundantly made out, and modern scholarship will respond to the demand for proof.<sup>1</sup>

But let us turn to another view of the question, and ask ourselves what we are called on to believe if we accept this vision of things to come as a genuine discourse of Jesus. The messianism of the gospels comes in a summary statement to this: Before the generation now living shall pass away the existing order of the world will come to an end in a sudden catastrophe announced by the most extraordinary portents and convulsions of nature, and preceded by terrible calamities. Then the Messiah will appear in glory, coming in the clouds of heaven with an escort of angels and the sound of trumpets, and will summon the dead to rise from the underworld and take their place with the living before his throne of judgment. This "judgment" will divide men into two categories according to the deeds of their life. The righteous will be admitted to a feast presided over by Abraham, and the Apostles will be enthroned as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel. The wicked will be cast into Gehenna, a place of darkness, of fire and the undying worm; and the torments of the one and the joys of the other will be alike without end. These pictures and predictions are plain and simple; there is no

<sup>1</sup> In the oldest gospel the interpolation occurs between the question (Mark xiii, 4): "When shall these things be?" and the answer (32) "of that day and hour knoweth no man,"—an answer which follows directly in naïve contradiction on the solemn declaration, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be done."



sign of any figurative sense; the writers mean them to be taken literally as matters of fact.

So then: Jesus, whose Good Tidings told of the heavenly Father and forgiveness of sin, who called men to the higher righteousness of love and a new life in union with the Divine, whose religion was so inward and spiritual, so pure from all earthly alloy—crowns all with an eschatology so gross and so grotesque! Jesus, whose revelation of God and of man was so completely new, of whom they said, "Never man spoke like this man"—can only repeat when he touches on mankind's destiny what the vulgarest rabbi had long been preaching in the synagogue! Jesus, who knew so well the heart of man and the slow pace of human progress, who, as I have said, read the ways of God in the ways of nature, wide, gradual, uniform and sure, whose outlook on the world was ever sane, calm, clear-eyed—yields to these fantastic dreams of his misguided people, and solemnly predicts as close at hand a startling series of preternatural events which have never come to pass! One who can believe that will believe anything.

The reaction against orthodox Christology on the part of some who have traced out the history of its development has led them to lay stress upon the heredity and environment of the Galilean Prophet, to regard him as subject to the influences affecting his land and time, and sharing the ideas, beliefs and sentiments of other pious Jews. In so far as this view tends to give reality and definiteness to the humanity of Jesus, which in the minds of many has been overshadowed by his divinity and suffered eclipse, it has been of service; but reactionary tendencies are apt to lead too far, and if we miss the essential in our emphasis upon the accidental, if we look upon the hero with the eyes of the valet and to us Jesus appears an ordinary mortal, on a level with his countrymen, then the effect of his life and work, the deep impress of his personality upon



the world are facts that remain unaccounted for. It is not in the aspects of his mind, in the circle of his thoughts, that liken him to other Jews that we find a true estimate of Jesus, but in those that differentiate him, those that belong to himself alone. And some of these were incompatible with current popular ideas. To say, as commonly it is said, that he shared the messianic expectations of the time is blindness to what is capitally distinctive of his Gospel. If Jesus had taken himself to be the Jewish Messiah there never would have been a Christian religion. When the generations passed and there was no parousia, Christianity did not collapse and disappear like a dream from the world, because, overlaid though it was with messianic perversions, there lived on at its heart the spirit of the life of Jesus and the eternal truths he taught mankind.

It is true it was the coming of a Kingdom of God that he proclaimed, but he adopted that term of the Jewish hope to give it an entirely new meaning. He took it as a setting or vehicle for his own ideas, and it had no more to do with his teaching than that it helped him to express those ideas; for a teacher of new truth must speak the language of the people and make use of the conceptions and symbols they are familiar with if he would gain a hearing. The Kingdom of God, or eternal life—we find in Mark's gospel that these are synonyms—was the inward state and character of the transformed soul in immediate communion with the heavenly Father, and the fellowship in brotherhood of such transformed souls. It was an inward and spiritual kingdom, having its seat in the hearts of men, not one to be set up in visible outwardness, and the negation of that Jewish conception is the essential novelty of the Gospel teaching. Now if Jesus believed in the coming of a Messiah, what kind of a Messiah was it that he must have believed in? It is evident that the

conception of the Messiah corresponds to that of the messianic kingdom, that the two belong together; and if Jesus did not accept the people's notion of the kingdom, he could not have accepted their notion of the Messiah. If the hope of a kingdom which should fall like a thunderbolt from heaven, crushing human resistance without conquering human souls, and adjudging to moral excellence a grossly material reward—if this seemed to Jesus, what it was, a regrettable delusion, then the corresponding hope of a Messiah, the national hero who in the power of Jehovah should establish the universal dominion of the chosen people and wreak a terrible vengeance on its enemies—this was equally a delusion. On the other hand if in his view of it the kingdom was of a purely spiritual nature, such in his view of it must be the character of the Messiah. He could be no other than a preacher of truth, a reformer of tradition, a revealer of the Father, a friend of sinners, an evangelist to the poor, an initiator of a peaceful religious revolution, the founder of a Kingdom of God in the souls of men whose unlimited power of expansion would be subject to that law of continuity, of inward development and organic growth which is everywhere the method of divine action. Such a Messiah as this Jesus was, the Messiah of his own Kingdom, and this was heaven wide from the Messiah of the Jews. He could not claim nor accept the title of Messiah unless the meaning of that title were utterly transformed.

And so the question comes to be whether Jesus assumed to be the Messiah in his own sense, a sense which had nothing in common with that of Jewish or Christian eschatology, or whether he never assumed to be the Messiah in any sense whatever. If we adopt the former supposition it appears that Jesus undertook the difficult task of substituting one Messiah for another in the minds of the people, of transforming the anointed champion of

Jehovah into the preacher of spiritual truth and righteousness,—and that he failed in the undertaking. For indeed failure was inevitable. The Kingdom of God, as the general notion of Israel's divinely ordered future, might be spoken of in general terms; it was a plastic conception and might be represented as signifying the regeneration of human life through the power of latent spiritual principles. The Messiah, on the other hand, was a definite conception not to be dealt with in this manner. To explain it in a spiritual sense was to explain it away. The Messiah was an individual. Jesus could not merely say, the Messiah is to be understood as such and such a one; as the prophet of the Kingdom he had to say in effect, if he spoke of him at all, the Messiah is myself. And once he took that name it would be scarcely possible to bring the people to take it in his sense, it was so closely bound to theirs. If they accorded him the title of Messiah they would expect him to assume the rôle assigned to that personage and head a rising against the Romans, and on his refusal they would reject him for an impostor. With this gulf of difference between him and the people he could not claim to be a Messiah of any kind without risking a fatal misunderstanding. Nothing could be more imprudent than to suffer this inflammatory word to be thrown out upon the common air and caught up as a revolutionary watchword. His only course was gradually to win acceptance as the Messiah that he really was through the effect of his Gospel and of his personality on men's hearts and minds. For this Jesus waited and hoped, but his success was limited and doubtful. When after the crisis in Galilee, on the eve of the fatal journey to Jerusalem, he asked the disciples whom the people took him to be, they said, John the Baptist, or one of the prophets, risen from the dead. To the question, whom say ye that I am? they replied, thou art the Christ. This acknowledgment was

something; it witnessed to the deep impression he had made upon these few who had followed him with faithful affection, if with scant intelligence, captivated by the strength and sweetness of his heroic soul. But this was not to recognise in him a purely spiritual Messiah. For them he was quite simply the Messiah; to the last, they were haunted by the apocalyptic dream. And so Jesus charged them not to proclaim him as the Christ, for that would only be to effect his identification with the popular ideal, the thing he sought to avoid. Soon, however, it is said, he was forced to put all to the touch. To gain at Jerusalem a hearing for the Gospel of the Kingdom and recognition of the authority of his message it was indispensable, in view of the condition of the popular mind, to assume at all hazards the character of the Messiah. And so now it became an urgent necessity to bring his followers to see in him, in the prophet of the spiritual kingdom just as they knew him, the only real Messiah. The time was too short. Jesus did not live long enough to effect that transformation of his disciples' beliefs and hopes which would have freed their religion from the delusions of Jewish messianism and cleared his own figure from the veiling haze of unreality through which posterity was to view it.

So the matter appears to stand if we adopt the supposition that Jesus assumed to be the Messiah in a sense of his own, to be the Messiah of his own spiritual kingdom. It is a view that seems open to one somewhat serious objection. To suppose that Jesus for any reason or with any purpose accepted a title without explaining that he only accepted it in a sense other than that in which it was given,—that he silently allowed the people to call him by a name to which they attached a signification altogether different from that which lay in his own mind, is to charge him with a lack of openness, almost amounting to duplicity,

scarcely in keeping with the character of an honest man and no less than shocking to our conception of the character of Jesus.

And now how is it with the alternative supposition that he never claimed to be the Messiah at all? When Jesus began his preaching at Capernaum what he declared was not that the Messiah had come and that he was the Messiah, but that the Kingdom of God was at hand. We find that throughout the Galilean ministry he never assumed any messianic title, nor asserted any messianic claim, and promptly silenced the demoniacs when they hailed him as Messiah.<sup>1</sup> These are facts not satisfactorily explained as due to the Messiah's wish to maintain his incognito. It is hard to find any other than the simple explanation that we have here the survival of a primitive tradition that Jesus never made any pretension to Messiahship, a tradition too old and firmly rooted to disappear. That this tradition finds admission in narratives imbued with the conviction which it contradicts is the best evidence that it transmits the fact of history. Furthermore, at this time the expectation of a personal Messiah was of comparatively recent origin and was far from universal. Neither the Book of Jubilees nor the Assumption of Moses nor the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, all dating from about the beginning of our era, make any mention of a Messiah. Although the fancy of the early Church depicted John as the herald of its Christ—ignoring

<sup>1</sup> It has been said that since the demoniacs who were supposed to be possessed by evil spirits of a superior order of intelligence, were in fact lunatics and epileptics, if we accept their testimony we confess that the Messiahship of Jesus was an idea that presented itself more readily to insane brains than sane ones, and having been suggested by madmen spread from them to the disciples. The only escape from this unpleasing position lies in the admission that these narratives are not historical, but belong to the mass of legendary additions which early grew up in the Christian church. Cf. W. R. Greg, *The Creed of Christendom*, 208.



their actual relations, clearly defined for us in Matt. xi—the fact seems to be that he followed the last of the prophets in announcing the coming of Jehovah himself to establish his kingdom. It is safe to say that when Jesus spoke of a Kingdom of God which should know no other ruler, a society where all men should be equal and none should exercise lordship and authority over his fellows, this idea of a kingdom without a Messiah was by no means a novelty. It would seem then that the endeavor to win acceptance as a Messiah of a totally different type from that of the popular expectation was as needless as it was difficult, was indeed only to court the needless difficulty of an added complication. Jesus spoke as the prophet of the kingdom and as a prophet he was regarded by the people.<sup>1</sup> To say that as such he was the Messiah could be no help, but almost certainly a serious hindrance to the preaching of the Gospel. And that was what he cared about—the heavenly Father, the metanoia, the righteousness of love—not to reform the conception of the Messiah or to associate himself with the reformed conception. It has been said that if Jesus had not proclaimed himself the Messiah his work would have remained incomplete, for he would have left the people still expecting some successor to appear and establish the messianic kingdom. This is not convincing. If he could bring the people to understand the kingdom in his inward and spiritual sense, their notion of the Messiah would go the way of their old notion of a material kingdom to which it was tied and which they would have abandoned. The issue of his ministry turned on this, his bringing the people to such an understanding. Now to this end he invoked no extraneous authentication of his Gospel, but left it to authenticate itself. He trusted all to the living truth of his

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii, 57; xxi, 11-46; Mk. vi, 4; xi, 32; Lk. iv, 24; vii, 16; xiii, 33; xxiv, 19.



message and the power of its appeal to men. If this was the method of his deliberate choice, why should he change it? If in Galilee to assume Messiahship was nowise necessary to the preaching of his kingdom, why should it be a necessity to the same preaching in Jerusalem? But, it may be said, he had failed in Galilee and this failure dictated a change of method. The answer is that such a change meant a surrender of principle which would have been the completest failure of all. Jesus came, as the fourth gospel makes him say, to bear witness to the truth, to commend it to the free acceptance of men's personal insight and conviction. This free acceptance was essential to the purpose of his mission. If his words should be received as true because uttered by the Messiah, or for any reason other than their own self-evidencing power, their truth could not be known. For they were words of eternal life, of spiritual truth, which cannot be passively received at second hand in deference to authority, because it is not of a nature to be given, and it is nothing to a man until he himself makes it his own.

That Jesus claimed to be Messiah is an affirmative proposition and as such assumes the burden of proof. It can hardly be said that this proof is furnished by the evidence of the synoptic gospels. Let us take first the account of Jesus' messianic entry into Jerusalem, seated upon an ass which he had sent for, and surrounded by an enthusiastic multitude hailing him as the Son of David. All this was done, our first gospel tells us, repeating its habitual formula, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. A passage in the book of Zechariah in which a King enters Jerusalem riding an ass was misinterpreted by the writer as referring to the Messiah; but not understanding the parallelism, or repetition, peculiar to Hebrew poetry, he added an ass's colt and made the Messiah ride on both. (Matt. xx, 7.) That

we have here a reading back of the messianic beliefs of the first Christians into the record of the Master's life is evident from the fact that once Jesus is in the city the sensational entry melts into thin air as though it had not been. When the people ask, Who is this? his followers reply, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth. His first action which was rightly understood to be an attack upon the sacrificial system—and to which his death at the hands of the incensed hierarchy was directly due—seems quite devoid of a messianic significance, but is in obvious accord with the spirit of the old prophets in their conflict with ritualism; and to the Sadducees' demand by what authority he disturbed the peace of the temple, he replied in effect by the authority of a prophet, by such as that of John the Baptist. Throughout the exciting discussions of these last days there is no hint that anyone dreams of taking him for the Messiah or for a messianic pretender. As to the moral impossibility of this messianic entry Prof. Schmidt writes as follows:

That Jesus should have suddenly changed his whole view of life and his attitude toward the royalist movement, that he should have sacrificed his prophetic ministry conceived in so lofty a spirit to fan the flames of a political insurrection, that the man whose convictions had led him to break with fundamental principles of the Law at the risk of reputation and life, and had resisted as a satanic temptation the idea of marching to power by the means of an aspirant to a throne, should have deliberately set about to arrange the details of a sensational entry into Jerusalem in accordance with a misunderstood prophetic passage, is as inconceivable as the development of the story is easy to explain. The death on Calvary was not so tragic as such a surrender of his ideal would have been.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 281. With this F. W. Newman agrees in principle while taking a different view of the facts. In a tract on "The True Temptation of Jesus" he writes: "It comes before me as a certain fact that the

We come next to the trial scene following the capture in Gethsemane, where we read that Jesus acknowledged his Messiahship in answer to the high-priest's question, and thereupon was condemned for blasphemy. It must not be overlooked that we have no means of knowing what took place on this occasion. The original sources of the gospel narrative close at the moment of Jesus' arrest, when "all the disciples forsook him and fled," and thenceforward the evangelists are dependent on tradition, whose uncertainty is reflected in the diversity of view that obtains among scholars as to the probable course of events. What was said on either side at the private examination in the house of the high-priest, or at the session of the Sanhedrim in the morning—if in such wise we interpret the accounts in Matthew and Mark of two successive meetings of the Council—can only have been a matter of conjecture on the part of Jesus' followers, and they would naturally assume that he must have been asked on oath whether he was the Messiah. That the account of these proceedings is not to be trusted is shown by the alleged effect of Jesus' declaration. It was no crime then or afterward to claim to be the Messiah—as appears from the great Rabbi Akiba's enthusiastic acceptance in that character of Simon named Bar-Kokeba. Still less could any Jewish court have constructed that claim into a blasphemy. "A rigid monotheism rendered it impossible for the Jewish Messiah to be more than a man," writes Schmidt (*op. cit.*, 92). And Holtzmann remarks (*The Life of Jesus*, 477):

Jesus' belief that he was the Messiah might be attributed to insanity or to foolish fancy; it could not be considered blasphemous so long as it was the general opinion that a man born of woman would one day stand forth as the Messiah.

---

true temptation of Jesus was the whisper made to him, Are you not possibly the Messiah? And by it the legendary devil overcame him."

The cry of blasphemy is simply an anachronism. When the synoptic gospels were written the terms Son of Man, Son of God, Son of the Blessed were synonymous, or tending to become so, and beginning to convey the meaning of divinity, so that the Christians would naturally suppose that their Lord had been charged with blasphemy. It is plain that we have here a narrative of late date and historically valueless. The real offence of Jesus, as we know from his whole history, had no concern with messianic pretensions; it was his revolutionary teaching, the antagonism of his Gospel to the religious system of the Temple and the Law.<sup>1</sup>

Finally let us return to the famous colloquy at Cæsarea Philippi. A text scarcely gives its true meaning if it be detached from its context, and so this episode is to be interpreted in the light of the general conclusions we are brought to by a study of Jesus' whole career; in that light it may wear a new aspect to the eyes of some. Driven from Galilee, Jesus had set his face to go to Jerusalem, determined to carry the Gospel message into the Holy City and abide the issue. He knew what to expect from

<sup>1</sup> So much may be said of Jesus' alleged acknowledgment of his Messiahship, but possibly we may go further and reject the whole story altogether. It is more than doubtful whether there was any trial, any meeting of the Sanhedrim, any questioning of Jesus whatever. As J. Réville points out (*Le Quatrième Evangile*, 269): "The alleged sessions of the Sanhedrim are in the highest degree improbable. The arrest of Jesus is effected by a priestly plot, without employment of any legal forms or methods. The priests of Jerusalem know their people. All there is to do is to put before them the *fait accompli*—to lay hold of Jesus by surprise and show him a prisoner, utterly discredited and deserted even by his followers—and they will not have to fear any popular movement on his behalf. For this there is no need of any judgment of the Sanhedrim." In this view of the case Jesus is hurried from Gethsemane to the high priest's palace, where a few privy to the plot are gathered to await its issue, kept under guard till the morning and then taken before Pilate and denounced as an inciter of sedition (Luke xxiii, 2 and 5) or accused of "many things" (Matt. xxvii, 13; Mark xv, 3).

Scribes and Pharisees, but what of the added danger in the messianic excitement? To measure its extent and learn what he had to cope with he asked his disciples what men were saying about him. The reply was fairly reassuring, but there remained perhaps a more serious danger; what did they think of him themselves? It is clear that up to this date, seventeen days before his death, no word had ever been breathed about his Messiahship either in popular rumour or within the inner circle of his followers. Now for the first time Peter ventures to affirm it. If he thought a leading question had been put to him to prompt the desired answer, it was not the first time he had failed to read the mind of Jesus, but never had he been more quickly undeceived. If his impulsive declaration was meant to force his Master's hand and oblige him to proclaim himself the king that should come, he was grievously disappointed. Jesus would not assume that title; he forbade his disciples to say that he was the Messiah; he would not have the people led to regard him as such. *Why*, if he *was* the Messiah? Surely he was bound to declare himself. His Messiahship was not a private dignity that could be clandestinely held. It was the divine message with which he was charged, and to keep it out of sight, not to press it insistently upon the people, would be a simple betrayal of trust. The injunction to conceal the claim is inconsistent with his having made or sanctioned it. So much is clear from what has been permitted to remain in the narrative; what more he may have said to disabuse the minds of his followers and bring them to a sense of his real character and mission we can only surmise from a statement thickly overlaid by later tradition.<sup>1</sup> He began to speak of the

<sup>1</sup> "If Peter had just been told not only of the Cross but of the Resurrection, could he have deprecated the death and taken no notice of the immortal glory to which it was but the prelude and condition?" Martineau, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, 350.



prospective issue of his desperate venture and the likelihood that he would meet the fate of so many a prophet before him. When Peter, still dazzled by his messianic vision, protested against the foreboding of suffering and death—so evidently a disclaimer of the pretension he had just advanced—he was met by the stern rebuke, “Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art a stumbling block to me, for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men.” Peter must have felt his assertion to be repudiated. It seems impossible not to see the intense anxiety of Jesus to put a stop to these messianic delusions.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the objection noted above it is not of vital importance which one of the alternatives considered we accept, since neither attributes to Jesus the wild fancies of his countrymen. Unhappily it is these that ruled the mind of primitive Christianity.

Through that one word Messiah it came about that the whole figure of Jesus was placed within the framework of the Jewish picture of the things to come that lay there ready to hand. In the latter no change was made whatever; the only addition was the name of Jesus. This oldest Christian dogma is nothing but the filling up of a Jewish outline with a concrete name. . . . The Jewish faith swallowed up the Christian; “Jesus the Messiah” is a Jewish idea, and remains such in spite of all the new meaning put into the conception.<sup>2</sup>

---

How is it that the definite and detailed predictions of his death and his resurrection which the synoptists put into the mouth of Jesus left the disciples so utterly unprepared for all that followed the arrest in the Garden that they were taken by surprise and scattered in dismay? The fourth evangelist says of Peter and John at the sepulchre that “as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead.” If they must “know the Scripture” to solve the puzzle of the empty grave, they could hardly have had the key to it supplied by their master’s distinct announcements.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 277.

<sup>2</sup> Wernle, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, i, 140.



The Christ of the early Church was indeed substantially the Messiah of the Jews, and its efforts were bent on so adjusting the life story of Jesus to the messianic ideal as to bring the two into a satisfactory unity. The difficulties encountered were overcome by the prevalent methods of exegesis which made it easy to discover Scriptural warrant for any position one desired to maintain. The Messiah of the Jews was armed with irresistible power for his triumph over the nation's enemies; the Messiah of the Christians had suffered a cruel death at their hands; but this was the true fulfilment of ancient prediction and a stumbling-block only to "fools slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken." The Jewish Messiah was still awaited; the Christian had come and gone; but a second coming could readily be imagined, and expected with the more eager confidence since the first one had already taken place.

Upon the contention that Jesus was the Messiah ensued the long controversy with the Jews. The Christians appealed to the Scriptures, and the whole of the Old Testament was interpreted as prophetic of their Messiah; the Epistle of Barnabas calmly asserts that "the red heifer in Numbers xix is the Lord Jesus." A bad cause was defended by worse methods. It was not only that the apologists went to the extreme in their employment of the arbitrary methods of exegesis generally practiced, more serious was the flagrant dishonesty with which passages of Scripture were altered, perverted, or invented. "All that they advance is figment, feint, and fabrication. He that would defend Jesus must prove his claim to the right titles, and must care as little as possible for the real Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

The scanty records of their faith suffice to show that the first Christians continued to hold to the apocalyptic

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the Christological controversy see Wernle, *op. cit.* ii, 33-53, whence the above is taken.

messianism of the Pharisees except so far as this was affected by their identification of Jesus with the Christ.<sup>1</sup> They believed in the two ages: "this age" of evil and misery—which was under the dominion of Satan, the "Prince of this age"—and "the coming age" of happiness and glory which would be introduced with the return of the Christ from heaven. This "parousia" would be of a sudden and without warning, and was expected within the lifetime of the existing generation. It would be followed by the judgment, which held the same central place in Christian thought as in Pharisaism. At first the Christians held the orthodox view that Jehovah Himself was the judge; the bold innovation in Jewish messianism which assigns that office to the Messiah is due to Paul.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> The Pharisaic ideas were largely drawn from the Persian religion which from the first made a deep impression on the Jewish mind. While its moral earnestness appealed strongly to the people of Jehovah, its treatment of the problem of evil was not consistent with the prophetic conception of Israel's God as the supreme ruler of the universe. In vain however had the great Prophet of the Captivity protested against the dualistic theory which represented the history of the world as a contest between the rival gods of good and evil (Is. xlv, 5-7). Adopting the Persian idea of an army of good spirits at war with an army of evil ones, the Jew beheld Satan, who appears in the Book of Job as the prosecuting attorney of the heavenly court, invested with the leadership of the fallen angels and sovereignty over a kingdom of evil, and employing the heathen nations as subordinate allies to persecute the people of God. The Persian cherished the hope that in some remote future the long conflict would close in the victory of good. When the time limit of the existing order should be reached judgment would be pronounced upon the world, the realm of hostile spirits destroyed, and an archangel would appear to bring to pass the resurrection of the good and the creation of a new world purified from evil. Out of these ideas arose the pictures of the future in the Jewish apocalyptic.

<sup>2</sup> The Messiah appears as judge in the "Similitudes" of the book of Enoch (xxxvii-lxxi), but that section of the apocalypse, which calls itself the Second Vision of Enoch, is admittedly of late date—the reign of Domitian, 81-96 A.D.—and it is not the work of one hand. In the original body of the vision God alone is judge and there is no Messiah. This work was apparently expanded by another writer who, under Christian influence, introduced the doctrine in question, which only appeared to be rejected.

kingdom of heaven, whose joys were the reward of the righteous, was still the material and sensuous kingdom of the Jewish hope, as appears for example from the prediction of the marvelous grapes which Papias ascribes to Jesus—apparently ignorant that it was to be found in the Apocalypse of Baruch. That Jews only should gain admission to the kingdom was the conviction of the Jerusalem church—though Paulinism of course held to the contrary—and this doubtless included the current belief as to the subjugation of the Gentile world to the glorified Jewish state. The Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection of the righteous was maintained by the Christians, and the resurrection of Jesus, by which he was manifested as the Messiah, became the corner-stone of their Apologetic. For there was nothing in the brief ministry of the Galilean prophet to lead men to regard him as the expected Messiah. It was evident to his disciples that his earthly life was no part of his messianic career; that career was prospective and its work lay in the future,—except in so far as Jesus had employed the interval between his death and resurrection in preaching to “the spirits in prison,” according to the peculiar dictum of an unknown writer which was embodied in the creed of the later Church.<sup>1</sup>

---

The author of Fourth Ezra enters a vigorous protest against the sacrilegious fancy that Jehovah would delegate to a creature his divine prerogative.

<sup>1</sup> I Peter iii, 19. The doctrine of the Descent into Hell does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament, but is often found in the extra-canonical gospels and acts current in the first centuries. It was derived from Gnostic circles in which the Mandaean myth of Hibil-Ziwa—itsself derived from the Babylonian original, the Descent of Ishtar—was characteristically modified. While the Mandaean hero delivers the imprisoned spirits by breaking down the gates of the underworld and slaying the dragon of darkness, the Gnostic Christ-Spirit effects this deliverance by imparting a secret knowledge which gives the soul controlling authority over the Satanic powers. (*Cp. Pfeleiderer's The Early Christian Conception of Christ*, 97-106.) Similar tales of a hero's descent into Hades are numerous in Greek mythology, and that they exerted an influence on Christian fancy appears from the fact that in the Catacombs Christ is depicted as Orpheus.

When it tried to picture what its Christ would be and do the infant Church could not escape from the messianic eschatology it had inherited from Judaism. As time went on this Jewish influence grew ever more dominant and it was long before it yielded to the influence of Hellas.

The whole of the later Jewish apocalyptic crossed silently over to the Christians and was held by them in canonical estimation. Along with it a mass of eschatological mysteries was conveyed by oral tradition—*e.g.* the legend of Anti-Christ—so that the farther we are removed from Jesus the more abundant are these Jewish fancies among the Christians.<sup>1</sup>

As with the Christians of Jerusalem, the Christian life of the Apostle Paul began in the conviction that Jesus was the Christ, and to spread abroad this conviction was the missionary labor of the converted Pharisee who raised this messianic faith of a despised people to the height of a world-religion. Conceptions of the character and office of the Messiah he had derived from Judaic speculation, and an inward revelation of that Messiah in the person of the crucified Nazarene was the experience to which his conversion was solely due. From these Jewish antecedents and this personal experience it resulted that eschatological messianism was not merely an appendix to a theology otherwise complete, but could be nothing less than the real centre of the entire scheme of Pauline thought.<sup>2</sup> It is true that Paul was led to the view of a Christian Messiah differing in certain aspects from the Jewish, but for the Apostle Jesus is always a heavenly Messiah, his earthly ministry is ignored, and the Christian life and destiny are bound up with his messianic work.

There is one book of the New Testament which breathes a purer air than that of messianism, and translates its

<sup>1</sup> Wernle, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ii, 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Cp.* Mathews, *op. cit.*, Pt. iii, ch. ii.

materialized eschatology into terms of the spiritual life. In the fourth gospel, the world is not given over to destruction, "for God sent not His Son to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii, 17). There is no looking forward to the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven to judge the world, for the Judge has already come in the person of the Spirit. The judgment is no court assize, but a silent, continuous, self-executing process of separation between the children of light and of darkness. With this the Jewish doctrine of resurrection disappears. Death is no longer a weary sojourn in the underworld, but the change of a moment, and the Logos declares: "If a man keep my word he shall never see death. . . . I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he die yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (viii, 51; xi, 25-26). And so "eternal" regains its Gospel meaning, becomes a qualitative term; eternal life is not life in a future world but the true life of spirit here and now: he that believeth *hath* eternal life (v, 24).<sup>1</sup> But the fourth gospel is a writing of the second century; its lofty idealism was something wholly foreign to the mind of the first Christians and of slight influence in later days. The early Church appears in history as simply a messianic fraternity awaiting their salvation from sin and death. "The Christian churches were composed of those who sought 'justification'—acquittal at the approaching messianic judgment,—by 'faith' that is, by accepting

<sup>1</sup> It is true there are passages where the language of messianism appears in contradiction with the doctrine of this spiritual gospel: the word the unbeliever will not receive shall "judge him in the last day," and those the Father hath given him the Son will "raise up at the last day." It would seem from these discordant utterances that the writer found himself forced to make some concession to beliefs too firmly fixed to be set aside, and obliged to avoid a violent break with the Jewish eschatology integral with the faith of the Church.



Jesus as the eschatological Messiah.”<sup>1</sup> The first Christian preaching was in its main effect a proclamation of the nearness of the messianic kingdom and the speedy coming of the Christ. “Christianity spread as the belief in a catastrophe impending over the whole world which the Messiah of the Jews was to introduce.”<sup>2</sup>

These messianic preoccupations accorded ill with the inspirations of Jesus; they went far to check and turn aside the influence of his Gospel upon the personal life, and to kill out all aspiration to social betterment. The ethical and social teachings of the Christian missionaries were addressed exclusively to the churches, religious fraternities separated from the outer world and having as little as possible to do with it. The Church was the Ark of salvation for the elect, withdrawn from society at large. Men hypnotized by their fixed gaze into the heavens had no thought for the conversion of the world, and their indifference to its interests was as inevitable as it was all but fatal to the advent of the true kingdom of God through the gradual leavening of society by new principles of life. For the end of all things was at hand. The judgment loomed upon the living generation. Why plan for posterity when there was not to be any posterity, or how could they be the salt of the earth who were to be saved as brands from the burning out of a perishing world? What it must have been to live in daily expectation of the messianic world-catastrophe when the Lord should descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ should rise and with them the living should be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air<sup>3</sup>; how the prospect of this immediate future must have dwarfed the

<sup>1</sup> Mathews, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> Hausrath, *The Times of the Apostles*, ii, 201.

<sup>3</sup> I Thess., iv, 16-17.



present into insignificance and dominated the thoughts and feelings of every hour, is something hardly possible for us to conceive. With the lapse of time the dream faded, the strain relaxed. Yet the old ideas did not lose their power. The kingdom of God was not thought of as the life of man ordered in harmony with the Divine; it belonged to another life in the heaven beyond the grave. It was still an evil world, to be renounced rather than redeemed; and there remained that breach between the Church and the world which contradicts the essential thought of Jesus, and has done more than anything else to cramp and thwart the beneficent action of Christianity upon society. And throughout all modification by Greek or Roman influence, throughout all adaptations to the changing conditions of its later history, messianism has survived to our own day in the religion taught in the name of Jesus, and saturates the language of Christian faith and worship. But if when that religion was a child it thought as a child and understood as a child, it is high time to take it out of the swaddling clothes of Jewish apocalyptic.<sup>1</sup> Out of what blindness to the real nature of Jesus, out of how dull a misconception of him did that idea take rise! How much purer and deeper would have been the religious life he brought into the world if these fantastic doctrines of the "last things" could have gone the way of the Levitical law in the first Christian generation!

If the disciples had only kept the injunction to tell no man that he was the Christ instead of spending their lives in

<sup>1</sup> "Not an interpretative concept born of an abandoned cosmology and a persistently political conception of God, but the eternal life born of God through faith in Jesus as His revealer—that is the eternal element in Christianity." Mathews, *op. cit.*, 321.

"It is time that intelligent people throughout the Christian world learned that the idea of a Messiah had its origin only in the fantastic dream of a few irresponsible fanatics, that there never could be a corresponding reality, and consequently that Jesus was not a Messiah." Lester, *op. cit.*, 41.

reversing it, Christendom, I am tempted to think, might have possessed a purer record of genuine revelation instead of a mixed text of divine truth and false apocalyptic. For the first deforming mask, the first robe of hopeless disguise, under which the real personality of Jesus of Nazareth disappeared from sight were placed upon him by this very doctrine which was *not* to go forth—that he was the Messiah. It has spoiled the very composition of the New Testament, and both in its letters and its narratives has made the highest influence ever shed upon humanity subservient to the proof of untenable positions and the establishment of unreal relations. . . . On this small and mistaken base there has been heaped up an immense and widening mass of Christian mythology, from the first unstable and now at last apparently swerving to its fall. And let it fall: for it has corrupted the religion of Jesus into an apocalyptic fiction; and that so monstrous in its account of man, in its theory of God, in its picture of the universe, in its distorted reflections of life and death, that if the belief in it were as real as the profession of it is loud, society would relapse into a moral and intellectual darkness it has long left and the lowest element of modern civilization would be its faith.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *op. cit.*, 329-325.

### III

#### Paulinism

[T may be thought that the last paragraph of the preceding note is somewhat warmly worded, but a careful study of the theology based on messianic conceptions will show at least how widely it differs from the religion of Jesus, and something of this difference cannot but appear even from the rapid glance at the Pauline "Gospel" which is taken in the following pages.

First, let us turn to the Apostle's doctrine of the Christ. The Messiah of the first Christians was a man, risen from the dead, taken up into heaven and enthroned on the right hand of God. The Pauline Messiah was a heavenly being who had descended upon earth in the form of a man. Such a modification of the primitive Christology was the easier for the Apostle since he had no share in that wealth of warm personal memories which clung to the living Jesus and made it absurd to imagine that he was not a real earth-born man. Paul writes of his Messiah that being originally in the form of God, he took the form of a slave, became in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man (Phil. ii, 6-8). Elsewhere we read that while the first Adam became a living soul, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit; the first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is of heaven (I Cor. xv, 45-47). In this latter passage Paul is adopting the

theory of Philo, the Hellenistic philosopher of Alexandria, concerning the creation of man. As we know, the first two chapters of Genesis give us two accounts of the creation, that of the primitive Jahvist in the second chapter and that of the later Elohist in the first. According to Philo's interpretation, however, we have in regard to man's creation not two different versions of the same event, but the report of two different creative acts. Gen. ii, 7, "the man became a living soul," refers to the man who appears at the beginning of human history—the first Adam; while Gen. i, 27, "God created man in His own image," refers to another man, one who will appear at the end of history—the last Adam. Paul's Messiah is this heavenly man. The phrase in Philippians, "in the form of God," appears to be simply an equivalent for "in the image of God" in Genesis. It seems then that it is not humanity, but the Christ that is created in the image of God. He is man, ideal Man, from the first. When it is said of the Christ that he was made in the likeness of men, was found in fashion as a man, it is only the earthly man of flesh and blood, man corporeal and corruptible, to whom these expressions apply. When Philo "Platonises" the heavenly Man is represented as the idea, the archetype, of Man that lies in the creative Mind before its realisation; but he has also definite statements which emerge from the realm of abstractions and show that he held to the actual existence of a personal heavenly being, and in this theory, it has been maintained, he is dependent on a current Hellenistic myth. It is to this concrete conception of Philo's and the Anthropos-myth that we must look for one source of the Pauline doctrine.

That doctrine drew upon other sources. It is not Alexandrine philosophy but Jewish apocalyptic that suggests the identification of the heavenly Man with the Messiah. In one of the visions of "Daniel the prophet"

the kingdoms of the world pictured in the form of animals rise successively before him until finally one "like a son of man" comes in the clouds of heaven to whom is given an everlasting dominion over the whole earth. According to the interpretation made known to the seer, this dominion, "the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven," shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High to possess it forever.<sup>1</sup> The human figure of the vision is therefore the representative of Israel, as the beasts represent the heathen monarchies. After the appearance of the Psalter of Solomon, however, this "Son of Man" came to be taken as signifying the Messiah, and the Christian community, possessed with the faith that Jesus was the Messiah, applied to him the prediction of Daniel and looked for his coming in the clouds of heaven to assume the dominion foretold. Such a being, strangely remote from the Prophet of the Galilean lake-side, could not really be regarded as merely a man, subject to the common limitations of humanity; but this latent implication of the "Son of Man" belief apparently passed without notice by the Christians until it was brought plainly to view by the messianic doctrine of St. Paul.<sup>2</sup> That Paul in the Philippian Letter had in mind the apocalyptic Son of Man seems not unlikely. Weiss thinks "it is worth while to ask whether the strangely chosen words of Phil. ii, 7, 'in the likeness of men,' 'being found in fashion as a man,' are not an echo of the curious words of Daniel vii, 13, 'like a man it came.'"<sup>3</sup>

Christ as the Heavenly Man is the dominant conception from which the Apostle's doctrine of salvation proceeds,

<sup>1</sup> Daniel vii.

<sup>2</sup> Writing in Greek, Paul does not use the Hebrew locution, Son of Man, which his readers would take as expressing human descent and origin. He calls Jesus the Man, translating for them the apocalyptic title.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, *Christ: The Beginnings of Dogma*, 79.

but his thought embraces other aspects of the being of Christ, and taking them all together we find that the Pauline Christology contains in germ the whole after development of that doctrine. Saul the Pharisee held the belief of a certain number of his co-religionists that the Messiah existed from all eternity with God in heaven, and when in the vision of his conversion Jesus was identified with this Messiah, that identification necessarily carried with it the assumption of his pre-existence; and we find his activity traced far back in the history of Israel in I Cor. x, 4: "They drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ." This preterrestrial existence was derived from God, and not merely by a creative act, as in the case of Adam. We read in Rom. i, 3, that it is the Son of God who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. This was a new doctrine to the Christians, for the sonship Paul has in mind is not to be understood in any general or figurative sense, but in the plain meaning of the term that denotes parentage from God; it is something unique—Christ is the Only-Begotten of the Father, as it was phrased in later times. The idea that the God of heaven might have a son is common to the Babylonian and Egyptian religions, but it never took root in Israel; it is one utterly foreign to the religion of Jehovah in its earlier as well as its later day. It may have spread from a polytheistic mythology over the Greek world, but where, precisely, Paul derived his conception of the Son of God he gives no hint, nor does he explain its exact significance. "We must be content with this result, that the conception of a Son, nearer to God than any other being and of like nature, was given to Paul and that he adopted it without much reflection and applied it to Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Paul's transformation of the Christian Messiah was practically imposed upon the missionary to the Gentiles.

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, *op. cit.*, 70.



The messianic preaching of the Jerusalem Church might be effective with the Jews of the Diaspora, but for Greeks of Ephesus or Corinth there was need of something more congenial with their mental habit and training than this foreign outlandish apocalyptic.<sup>1</sup>

Another phase of this Christology points plainly to a Hellenistic origin. In I Cor. viii, 6 we read: "To us there is one God, of whom are all things and we unto Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him." This chapter deals with the question of idol meats, and the statement of verse 6 appears in the context as a parenthetical, almost a casual, utterance, and one which will be readily understood and needs no explanation. In fact the prepositions in this passage—of whom, through whom—are familiar terms of the widely diffused popular philosophy, as expounded by Seneca, Plutarch, or Philo, and express relation to the cause and the instrument of the world's creation—God and the Logos. When the Apostle wrote that it is Christ "through whom are all things," the Corinthians could only understand him to assert that Christ had taken the very same place in the Christian faith which the Logos held in the Greek system.<sup>2</sup> That God should require an assistant in creation is not to be gathered from the accounts in Genesis, nor does it go well with monotheistic belief, but such a notion would seem quite acceptable wherever the idea prevailed that it was

<sup>1</sup> "How can we imagine that the crucified Messiah of the Jews could have made his triumphal march through the Greek and Roman world if he had not put on in Paul's proclamation of him the luminous form of the celestial Son of God in which he could be readily received by the religious and philosophical consciousness of the heathen world?" Pfeiderer, *The Influence of the Apostle Paul on the Development of Christianity*, 12.

<sup>2</sup> "As for the name, Logos, Paul does not actually make use of it, but except for the word, Philo's speculative theories have now become positive religion in the school of Paul." Hausrath, *Time of the Apostles*, iii, 103.

the province of intermediary beings to maintain relations between God and the world.

Paul's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is of all others in his theology perhaps the most obscure, since it belongs in the region of profound mysticism and, besides, appears singularly vacillating and unsettled in its statement. While in some passages he speaks of the Spirit as an independent personality (I Cor. xii, 4-6; II Cor. xiii, 14), and again of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ as one and the same (Rom. viii, 9), or of the Spirit as the Spirit of the Son (Gal. iv, 6), in one place at least the Spirit is distinctly identified with Christ: "Now the Lord is the Spirit" (II Cor. iii, 17). In the former Letter it is said that "the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. xv, 45)—with which we may compare the phrase of Rom. viii, 2: "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." This is only to represent Christ as a spiritual being; that the Lord is *the* Spirit and not merely *a* spirit would seem to be announced as the full truth of the earlier assertion. The same teaching appears in the fourth gospel: "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, the Spirit of truth. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you" (John xiv, 16-18). Christ the Spirit dwells in the individual soul (Gal. ii, 20; Rom. viii, 11; I Cor. iii, 16) and the soul in Christ (II Cor. v, 17). Or Christ is formed in a man and he becomes with Christ one spirit (Gal. iv, 19; I Cor. vi, 17). And this that is true of each is true of all believers. All are in Christ, and together they constitute his mystic Body; in him they are all one man (Gal. iii, 28). That many spirits might dwell in one person was a common belief, but it appears to be a teaching original with Paul that one spirit may dwell in many persons. Subjectively, the consciousness, or the *feeling*, of this indwelling Spirit tends to override or overcloud other important elements of

a healthy personal religion, but here we have to note the objective effect of this mystical teaching. In this aspect of the Pauline Christology the personality of Christ melts into the general element of the Spirit which fills all Christians. Christ the Spirit takes the place of the Divine Energy which according to the contemporary philosophy envelops and pervades all existence, and such a conception brings with it a "pantheistic dissipation" of his actual personal being.

We come finally to the difficult question of the Incarnation, and for Paul's view of it we may turn again to the passage in Philippians referred to above. Though his being was in the form of God, the Christ did not grasp at equality with God—as the first man had attempted when the serpent held out to him this alluring prize. More than that, he surrendered the God-like form he possessed, divested himself of his heavenly glory, and in contrast with the divine lordship he might have aimed at, assumed the form of a slave, the likeness of men; and becoming subject to death, died the death of a felon. The Incarnation then was a voluntary renunciation, a great relinquishment: "Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor" (II Cor. viii, 9). The expression, "he emptied himself" (ἐαυτον ἐκένωσε), is not to be taken literally, as if Christ had parted with the essence of his being; it means rather that he stripped himself of his divine prerogatives when he put off "the body of his glory" to take "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. iii, 21).

The expression affirms quite generally that he gave up a valuable possession in that he underwent a change of "form," of the outward condition of his existence. The inward nature of Christ remained unaltered in the process; as man with a body of flesh he still remained the same person, the heavenly Man in earthly garb.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, *op. cit.*, 100.

So then Christ incarnate has a twofold being, or in him two beings of different order are united: Jesus of Nazareth, born of a woman, subject to the Law, of the seed of David—begotten, that is, by one of the house of David—to all appearance a man like any other man; yet at the same time the Man from heaven, a spiritual being existent before the creation and himself taking active part in that work. It was a necessity to the Pauline theology that the Christ should die, and to that end he had to appear on earth in the flesh. "Had Paul remained a Jew," remarked Weiss, "he would not have needed the idea of incarnation"; there would have been no reason why his heavenly Messiah should enter into this strange union with an earthly man. The nature of this union, how it is to be conceived, is a problem that bristles with trouble for the Apostle. It is his fixed preconception that the "flesh" is inherently sinful; the body of flesh is a body of sin (Rom. vi, 6). If then a divine spirit becomes incarnate, how can he escape subjection to "the law of sin"? When we read that Christ "died unto sin" (Rom. vi, 10) is it not a necessary implication that in his earthly life he was, however free from actual transgression, capable of sinning? When Paul writes: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii, 3), if that means that sin was put to death in the crucifixion of the Christ, does it not inevitably follow that sin must have reigned in the mortal body of the Christ? If he by his death delivered mankind from the power of sin, must he not have been actually a man, sharing with other men the proclivity to sin? These questions seem to demand an affirmative answer, but on the other hand to the Apostle's mind nothing is more unquestionable than the absolute sinlessness of the Divine Man from heaven, his incapability of sin in every form of his existence. Hence arises a contradiction which resists all

attempts to resolve it. It is plain that an organic union between a divine being and human nature as Paul conceives it remains an impossibility. The Apostle betrays a sense of the *impasse* he has reached by what seems a half-conscious endeavor to evade it. In the passage of Romans last cited we read that God sent His Son "in the likeness of the flesh of sin." That the Son is sent in the flesh of sin is what the argument in this place really requires, but Paul shrinks from so extreme a statement, and in modification of it the term "likeness" is as it were slipped in. This means, if it means anything, that the body of Christ was similar to that of sinful flesh, but not the same. Or, if we take another meaning of *ὁμοιωμα*, it means that in "appearance" Christ was physically a man like other men; and it is implied that this was only in appearance, that the garment of flesh he assumed was something wholly external to him. This is the doctrine we met with at the outset in Phil. ii: "made in the likeness of men and found in fashion as a man." That is, he looked like a man and behaved like a man, but—all this was mere outward appearance. "The opposition is between what he *is* in himself and what he *appeared* in the eyes of men" (Light-foot). So then the human nature of the Christ, far from being his own nature, is in effect the disguise of a masquerade, and the way is open to the approach of Docetism and its phantom Christ. Paul would have protested against such an inference from his doctrine, but it must be admitted that it is not illogical. The manhood he attributes to the Christ is not only something external and inessential to him, it is merely a matter of physique. It is of course the possession of thought, feeling, will in a way peculiar to oneself that constitutes a definite human individuality, and so human individuality is just what is lacking to the divine being Paul calls a man, to the Jesus that he makes one with Christ.



If with the primitive community Paul could have regarded Jesus simply as a prophetically inspired man, who after death was exalted to God, no difficulty would have arisen. But his problem was to unite the conception of the heavenly Christ with the tradition of the crucified Jesus, and this was possible only at the expense either of the human or the divine (he wants to keep both unimpaired), or at the expense of the organic unity of the personality. The result was a hybrid form which already contained the foundations and anticipations of all possible heresies and almost all the Christological problems of the future.<sup>1</sup>

To this we may add the pronouncement of Meyer.

What we find in St. Paul is really a Gnostic system, as much a creation of thought and imagination as the creations of Valentinus and Basilides in the sphere of heretical Gnosis, or of Origen in the Church. . . . Paul shares in the questionable characteristics of all Gnosticism; in that predominance of the fantastic, that speculation which is the slave of feeling and fancy; that tendency to loose generalising; that interweaving of absolutely incongruous elements; that absorbing interest in cabalistic theory and in myth instead of in historical fact. In spite of his alien garment of earth the Heavenly Christ remains a genuinely Gnostic creation.<sup>2</sup>

While the Christology of Paul has vital importance for us in view of its later development, his Soteriology is the constituent of what may loosely be called his system that chiefly claims attention. It is a doctrine difficult to deal with because the conceptions that underlie it and the principles it assumes are archaic, bizarre, foreign to our modes of thinking, and because the expression of them is fragmentary, incoherent, often inconsistent and sometimes contradictory.<sup>3</sup> Briefly, in its main outlines, it

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, *op. cit.*, 115.

<sup>2</sup> Meyer, *Jesus or Paul?* 23.

<sup>3</sup> "The thought wavers and alters from one letter to another, even from chapter to chapter, without the slightest regard for consistency.



comes to this: Christ came from heaven for the salvation of men, and what men needed to be saved from was the misery of their whole condition in this world, dominated as it is by the evil powers, Flesh, Sin, Law, and Death. These powers loom up before the Apostle's mental eye vast and vague, like objects seen through fog, and balefully active. It is owing perhaps to the native incapacity of the Semitic mind for abstract thinking that each of them, conceived as a power of universal sovereignty in the life of the race, wears the appearance of a kind of mythological monster and is spoken of quite as if it were a personal agent. Or we might say that Paul holds to the "reality of general ideas," anticipating the theory long dominant among the medieval Scholastics.

To him "the flesh" in general is not an abstraction but a reality, a great powerful existence in life, in which as members all individual men by reason of their corporeality have part. And in the same way sin is a great, universal, uniting power which rules in the whole organism of corporeality.<sup>1</sup>

The "flesh of sin," the "body of death" are not rhetorical expressions; they are misunderstood if not taken literally. Sin has its seat in the flesh and clings to it indissolubly; and since every man is "in the flesh," he is, in virtue of his mere bodily existence, of necessity subject to sin.<sup>2</sup>

---

His points of view and leading premises change and traverse each other without his perceiving it. Tortured attempts to reconcile his opposing statements are futile, nor is it safe to say that Paul could not have meant a thing because it leads to impossible consequences; the consequences may be impossible, but Paul did not heed them." Wrede, *Paul*, 77.

<sup>1</sup> Weiss, *op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>2</sup> "With the usual personifying tendency of antiquity Paul makes the sinful principle an independent entity, an active subject to which all manner of predicates can be attached. . . . He really saw in sin a demonic spiritual being which takes possession of men, sets up its throne in the material flesh of their body, excites the passions, enslaves the will, and

The Law comes in to make matters worse. It brings the knowledge of sin, incites to sin, turns sin into guilt, and so works death to the man—for death, extinction, is the inevitable consequence of sin (Rom. vii, 7-13). Death is ranked among the evil spirits whom Christ is to overcome, and this "last enemy" to be destroyed is spoken of as if it were an individual being; it is a representation that reminds one of St. George and the Dragon. These evil spirits—angels, principalities, and powers—are the "rulers of this world." It seems that God has retired in favor of His hostile rivals and left mankind helpless under their tyranny, which is allied with that of sin and the others.<sup>1</sup>

From this desperate plight of the human condition men are rescued by the death and resurrection of Christ. The heavenly Man assumes the garb of sinful flesh, becomes subject to the Law and its curse (Gal. iii, 10-13), and falls under the sway of the demonic powers who finally crucify him (I Cor. ii, 6-8).<sup>2</sup> Christ must die because he is a man, because he has taken upon himself the sinful human nature which is doomed to death. With this the triumph of the demons seems assured, but at the last moment the Crucified snatches victory from defeat. Through death he passes out of the hands of the malignant powers. Dis-

---

delivers body and soul over to death." Pfeiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, i, 277-278.

<sup>1</sup> The universe in which Paul lives, from the demonic powers which rule it to the flesh in which he imprisoned, is absolutely alien from God; it is a great Charnel-house wherein Death reigns as King, where God Himself cannot and indeed will not give any help; where all morality is sin, all religion is idolatry, all growth is corruption. Of a Hell Paul says nothing; this world is Hell enough for him." Meyer, *Jesus or Paul*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> This passage does not refer to Pilate or the High Priest. Wrede's comment is that "Paul means the demons have fallen into their own pit. They thought to destroy Christ by the crucifixion. They would not have crucified him had they known the wisdom of God, had they suspected that the Cross of Christ would bring salvation to the world and make an end of them." Wrede, *Paul*, 98, note 4.

carding the robe of flesh, he is freed from all that belongs to Sin, Law, and Death. He died to sin once for all, and death no longer has dominion over him. Risen from the dead, he enters, or re-enters, into the divine life which is above the reach of attack by the rulers of "this world."<sup>1</sup>

Now if we ask, what has this exceptional experience of one individual to do with the salvation of mankind, the answer is that this individual is the representative of the human race, and his death and resurrection—the two always taken together in one—are vicarious: "One died for all, therefore all died." The flesh of sin was condemned to death on the Cross, and by the death of Christ, substitutionary for the death of all, men are delivered from the power of sin, redeemed from the curse of the law, and in his resurrection risen to the immortal life. It is true that believers are still in the world, still in the flesh, still subject to Satan, god of this world, and the powers from whom, it is declared, Christ has freed them. To Paul, however, this is only a seeming contradiction, and he does not hesitate to say that Christians are dead to sin, and,

<sup>1</sup> "The thought that a divine being forsakes heaven, veils himself in humanity and then dies in order to ascend again into heaven is in its essence a mythological conception." Wrede, *Paul*, 179.

For the Greeks the Pauline Christology embodied the truth of all those familiar tales of the sons of the gods who descended from heaven as champions of deliverance, and it was as a form of this myth that they accepted it. In Syria and Cilicia, where Paul worked for fourteen years, such notions or fancies were especially prevalent, and the preaching of the Resurrection would meet with the readier hearing since Adonis and other vegetation gods died yearly and after three days returned to life in the upper world. In Paul's messianic doctrine "we hear again that primeval strain wherein mankind through the ages sings of the Divine Hero who descends to earth and into the depths of the underworld, thence returning victorious to the throne of God, there to take up his power and dominion. We hear it now in its Christian form, in the characteristic transformation it has undergone in a Jewish soul, and enforced by the exegesis and dialectic of the Rabbins." Meyer, *op. cit.*, 39.

therefore, should not let sin reign in their mortal body (Rom. vii, 11-12). For this doctrine of redemption anticipates the future. Christ has already died and risen, and so in a sense the death and resurrection of all men are accomplished facts, only they are not yet outwardly realised. Hence the attitude of Christian life is one of suspense, of looking forward to the salvation which follows upon actual death. Such an attitude, we must remember, is not unreasonable on the part of one who believed that the coming of Christ and the end of the world were very near at hand. Nor is the Christian left wholly to himself in the present life. He is visited by a divine helper, and the earnest of salvation is given him in the indwelling of the Spirit. This is not to be interpreted in the modern sense as a penetration of the personality in which it becomes one with the divine; in Paul's conception the Spirit remains always supernaturally external, a power foreign to the personal soul, whose working leaves no room for man's free agency. The Christian's virtues are not his own; they are "fruits of the Spirit." So too salvation is not something personal, a spiritual attainment; it is something objective, a change in the conditions of existence. For sin is not a matter of the individual will, but of human nature, and so it is not moral betterment but a change of human nature that results from the redemptive death of Christ. Since the Reformation religion has been mainly concerned with the personal soul, and its deepest problems are psychological. In Paul's theological construction he is not thinking of the individual at all, but always of humanity as a whole. Death with Christ is not a personal experience, except as being a general fact, it is the condition of all believers. The doctrine of salvation is a recital of a dramatic series of events, and all is cast in the mold of a time element and viewed as past, present, and future. Flesh and spirit, sin and righteousness are marks

of different periods, and Christ stands at the turning point of the old age to the new.

A main foundation of this Pauline doctrine is the Neo-Platonic Dualism which for generations had dominated Hellenistic thought, itself an echo of that Dualism of the far East which in after times was to affect more directly the mind of the Christian Church. Above is the heavenly world, the eternal source of life, the home of the ideal types of all being; below is the material world which only exists in that the shadows of the ideas lend it form and life. This material world is in its nature contrary to the spiritual; it is finite, or "corruptible," and as material, unclean and evil. To this impure world of sense human nature belongs and is subject to the laws of its existence. It appears further that the Apostle's anthropology is simply a Christian modification of the popular Animism inherited from primitive times. The soul is not organically united with the body, but merely contained in it, so that it can pass out on occasion and have experiences by itself alone, as Paul thinks may have occurred in his own case (II Cor. xii, 2); and so also other spiritual beings can for a time, or permanently, enter and dwell within the body of a man. Thus with the "outer man" in bondage to Sin and the "inner man" possessed by a divine Spirit, no place is left for human freedom or personality. It is a supernaturalism that obliterates the ethical consciousness, and leaves man to experience passively the action of the different spiritual beings—personifications of his own motives and impulses placed outside himself. In Gal. v, 17, we see man striven for by hostile powers, so that he never does his own will but always that to which he is driven by one or the other.

Such then is the general view of Redemption as affected, we may say, by the Incarnation, by the Son of God taking upon himself the human condition and as man



dying and rising from the dead. It may be summed up in Wrede's words: "Christ becomes what we are that we through his death may become what he is." In this doctrine the Apostle's originality declares itself. The stumbling-block to Saul the Pharisee he makes the cornerstone of his Christian theology. The Christians felt themselves put on the defensive in their preaching of a crucified Messiah. That scandal in Jewish eyes they endeavored to minimise, and to explain and justify from prophetic Scripture. To their faith Jesus risen from the dead and exalted to glory was in spite of his death on the Cross the Messiah of Israel; in the teaching of Paul it is by virtue of that death that he becomes the Saviour of the world.

Another aspect of the death of Christ, one that holds special prominence in the Apostle's "Word of the Cross," is the sacrificial; for Christ's death brings remission for the sins of men as well as extinction of the primordial power of Sin. Propitiatory sacrifice to appease an offended god, or to clear those guilty of the offence by the death of a victim offered in their stead, is a practice that appears to be common to all early religions at a certain stage of development. It is held that death is the penalty for an act which the cultus makes a crime, but it is believed that the god will accept the life of an animal in place of that forfeited by the criminal.<sup>1</sup> This idea was firmly fixed in the mind of Israel, and not to be dislodged by the protest of the prophets that the only way to reconciliation with Jehovah lay in repentance and reformation. In the later days of the Exile the ideas of expiation and substitution, embodied in the ritual of sacrifice, found fuller expression. It was the accepted belief that all suffering was a punishment for sin, and now the belief arose that a

<sup>1</sup> For the ritual of sin-transference in early times see Farnell, *The Evolution of Religion*, 116-120.



man's suffering might atone for his sin, that after an adequate amount of suffering his sin would be done away and he be restored to favor. Such was the comforting message of the "second Isaiah" to his people. Furthermore, according to the primitive principle of the solidarity of the clan, which bound all its members into a unit of moral responsibility and made all sharers in the guilt of each, the suffering was not necessarily to be borne by the offender, but the sin of the father might be visited on the children, or the nation suffer for the faults of the rulers. This notion of vicarious punishment was repudiated by Ezekiel who insisted on the sole accountability of the individual sinner, but this common-sense doctrine made little impression on minds possessed by the traditional views. At the same time the idea was growing among the exiles that there might be such a thing as unmerited suffering. This is the unsolved problem of the Book of Job. That such suffering is vicarious is the solution offered in the Songs of the Servant of Jehovah. Upon the pious faithful kernel of the nation was laid the iniquity of all, in order that its suffering should purge away their guilt and all should come to share the blessing due to its righteousness.

Such are the general notions underlying Paul's theory of the Atonement, which comes in brief to this: All mankind is guilty of the sin of Adam and lies under the wrath of God, doomed to destruction; but the Messiah, a second Adam, offers himself for a sacrifice in the stead of mankind, and his death is accepted as an equivalent satisfaction of divine justice. This is thoroughly accordant with Judaic principles. The legal status of man is maintained and the axiom, "without shedding of blood is no remission." The Law is inexorable in its demand for the penalty of sin. It is a power which even God cannot disregard and He is unable to arrest its fatal course. Man cannot be saved

from perishing unless an innocent being shall intervene to make atonement by taking the penalty upon himself. Paul inherits this doctrine from the teachers of his people, themselves inheritors of primitive thought. Everything in Paulinism has its root in the sacrificial death of Christ, as everything in the Gospel grows out of the fatherhood of God, or the organic union of divine and human nature.<sup>1</sup> "We have, therefore, in Paul's theology not an expansion of Jesus' thought, but an immanent development of the Jewish consciousness called into being by the new fact of the crucified Messiah."<sup>2</sup> Paul, a disciple of the Pharisees, makes their legal religion the starting-point of his theory of redemption. He does not question the Pharisaic postulates and premises, but simply applies them to the case of the death of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Since the purpose of Christ's mission to earth is to be found in his death, necessarily the earthly life of Jesus—his personal acquaintance with whom was limited to the

<sup>1</sup> "The idea of atonement is the true starting-point of Pauline Theology. There can be no question that belief in the atonement was the genetic prius of belief in the incarnation and the divinity of Christ; these doctrines are inevitable inferences from that of atonement." Mackintosh, *The Natural History of the Christian Religion*, 397.

<sup>2</sup> Hausrath, *The Time of the Apostles*, iii, 78.

<sup>3</sup> "Ever since Paul the ruling idea of Christianity has been that of the redemption of man, guilty of a prehistoric fault, by the voluntary sacrifice of a *Superman*. This doctrine is founded upon that of expiation—a guilty person must suffer to atone for his fault—and that of the substitution of victims—the efficacious suffering of an innocent person for a guilty one. Both are at once pagan and Jewish ideas; they belong to the fundamental errors of humanity. Yet Plato knew that the punishment inflicted on a guilty person should not be a vengeance, but a deterrent and its end the protection of society; and about the same time Athenian law laid down the principle that punishment should be as personal as the fault. Thus St. Paul founded Christian theology on two archaic ideas which had already been condemned by enlightened Athenians of the fourth century before our era, ideas which no one would dream of upholding in these days, though the structure built upon them still subsists." Reinach, *Orpheus: A General History of Religions*, 237.

vision on the road to Damascus—was to Christ's Apostle a matter of entire indifference. He never appeals to utterances of the Master in support of teachings of his own, and to anything learned from Peter during his fourteen days stay at Jerusalem he never once alludes. "If in the face of probability we assume that he had at an early date heard much about Jesus, it only becomes the more astonishing that this possessed no significance for his mind."<sup>1</sup> For any dependence upon the primitive Apostles he expressly denies. He insists that his gospel was not "received from man"; it was not based upon knowledge of the words and deeds of Jesus, but upon his inward vision of the heavenly Christ. He did not care to "confer with flesh and blood" after his conversion, since to know Christ after the flesh was not to know him at all.<sup>2</sup> For the terrestrial Jesus was but the appearance of the celestial, archetypal Man working in the new creation of humanity. He was sent into the world not to witness to the Father's love and the potential divinity of man, but to earn the repeal of the death sentence upon mankind. He did not come to live, but simply to die. In this doctrine of a crucified and risen Superman

the biography of Jesus, the traits of his mind, the story of his ministry, play no part at all: it is from heaven, after he

<sup>1</sup> Wrede, *Paul*, 148. Some recent writers have endeavored to make out that Paul was quite fully informed concerning the life and teaching of Jesus, and to a great extent even before his conversion. This arduous effort merits a greater success than it seems to have attained, but after all the point is not of first importance. The important point is that "the character of Jesus and of his life and work did not determine the nature of Paul's theology. This fact remains indisputable, however much Paul may have known of Jesus, whatever he may have heard of him by chance in the course of his missionary work, and though moved by such accounts more deeply than we know." Wrede, *Paul*, 166.

<sup>2</sup> "The fact that St. Paul had never seen or heard the Lord when he was on earth, and that in his zeal for his own independence he had held aloof

has done with the hills of Galilee and the courts of the Temple, that he begins with his last Apostle; and it is in heaven alone that that Apostle knows anything of him—in his glorified state and immortal function, and not in the simple humanity and prefatory affections of his career below. The Pauline Gospel opens where the others cease.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus so lived the truth he taught that from the first a narrative of his life was called a gospel, but the personality of the Man of Nazareth disappears from a "gospel" which shows no trace of contact with the primitive tradition. The Apostle's doctrine has its source, he tells us, in a personal revelation and the inspiration of the Spirit; that is, in his own thoughts, ideas, and intuitions. What St. Paul calls "my gospel" is indeed his own—the outcome of the workings of an individual mind, and its idiosyncratic intellectualism weakened it for practical effectiveness.

Without that Gospel which existing side by side with Paul's perpetuated the marvellous sayings of the actual Jesus and immortalised his form in its human greatness and in its oneness with God, his preaching of the Cross of the God-sent Christ who destroyed the flesh and inaugurated the kingdom of the Spirit would have been a doctrine for thinkers, a structure of ideas.<sup>2</sup>

---

from those who had known Jesus, was in every sort of way fatal for the Apostle." Meyer, *Jesus or Paul?* 90.

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *Seat of Authority in Religion*, 330. "The price which had to be paid (for Paul's services to Christianity) was the envelopment of the historical person, Jesus, in the mythical form of this super-temporal Christ-Spirit descended from heaven." Pfeiderer, *Christian Origins*, 213.

<sup>2</sup> Weizsacker, *The Apostolic Age*, i, 173. "Throughout the whole history of the Church the imitation of Jesus and the contemplation of the whole personality of that sincere and loving human soul has represented a distinct stream, a distinct form of Christianity of peculiar simplicity and force which holds the balance against the Pauline form." Meyer, *Jesus or Paul?* 126.

We find a logical ground for this ignoring of the life of Jesus in what we may call the Apostle's philosophy of history which divides the life of humanity into two great periods, one of the flesh and sin and death which covers all time since Adam, the other of the Spirit, righteousness and life which opens with the resurrection of the Christ. The life of Jesus—who was born of a woman, of the seed of David, under the Law, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh—belongs to the first period which is superseded and passed away forever. Here the contrast between the first and the second Adam appears as one of nature: Adam is earthly, Christ is heavenly. Later on, however, the contrast is presented as in reference to conduct: Adam was disobedient, Christ obedient even unto death. And this brings us to another view of the origin of sin than the one previously set forth. Sin now is not inherent in the constitution of humanity; its source is traced to the Eden-myth and it is derived by heredity from the disobedient Adam. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all sinned." On the principle of the solidarity of the race the transgression of its representative, the first man, is placed to the account of all his descendants, so that in effect each one of them is held to have committed it himself.<sup>1</sup> This theory, foreign to the canonical Old Testament, is that of the Pharisaic theology, and Paul adopts it because it serves his purpose

<sup>1</sup> "A great part is played in this theology by the thought that what happens to the first of a historical series happens in consequence to the whole series. Adam is the headspring of humanity; since he died all who belong to his race also die. Again, Christ is the first of a series; since he rises from the dead all rise with him. We can see no reason whatever for such deductions from the leader of a line to those that follow him. We ask why has the experience of Adam or of Christ such an effect on other men. For Paul the matter is one of immediate evidence; in other words, he thinks under a law which does not obtain for us." Wrede, *Paul*, 81-82.



in his exposition of the Atonement. Elsewhere he gives us the doctrine, original with himself, that sin belongs essentially to the nature of man in that he is flesh, and, therefore, Adam's volition need not be called in to set against the good a nature already opposed to it. These theories are mutually exclusive: one must choose between the two. Was the Fall the cause of Sin, or Sin the cause of the Fall? If sin *entered* with Adam's *fall*, then it was not a primordial constituent of Adam's nature, and the doctrine of "sinful flesh" goes by the board. If on the other hand that doctrine be accepted, then, since the transgression worked no change in a human nature essentially sinful, there can have been no fall of man—there was no height of primal innocence from which to fall. Paul ignores the dilemma and goes from one position to the other as either best suits the occasion.<sup>1</sup>

The original doctrine finds support in his consideration of the relations of Sin and Law. The proclivity to sin, the sinful impulse, exists before moral consciousness. This arises when law dictates the course of action.

Man now fulfils the impulse of the flesh *against* his better knowledge, and thus sin becomes transgression and guilt may be imputed. Yet man was incapable of doing otherwise. Sin is a necessity of human nature because it is a property of the flesh, and man can no more free himself from sin than from his physical frame.<sup>2</sup>

Law, an outward authority, exacts absolute obedience to its behests, and goes no farther. It gives man a moral criterion of his actions, but it gives him no power to con-

<sup>1</sup> Pfleiderer (*Primitive Christianity*, i, 103-104) notes six other instances of contradiction in the Apostle's doctrinal statements; it is plain that all are due to the presuppositions of different lines of thought, that they cannot be harmonised and must be left to stand as they are.

<sup>2</sup> Hausrath, *The Time of the Apostles*, iii, 89.



form to it. It wakens the consciousness of sin and the sense of moral responsibility—"I had not known sin except through law"—but it leaves man hopelessly bound and fettered to his sinful nature, with the sole result that actions formerly indifferent are now known to be unlawful and as such render him guilty. For there is no overt sin without law; "Apart from law sin was dead"; that is, it was dormant, existing only virtually and not actually. "When the commandment came sin revived"; the definite prohibitions of law provoke self-assertion, incite the sensual impulses, multiply the occasions of sin and perpetuate the tragic experience of peremptory provocations, rebellious desires, unequal struggles and inevitable defeats which is pictured in Romans vii. Thus "the development initiated by law can only lead further and further from God" (Hausrath). To be under the law is the same as to be under the dominion of sin, and in another Letter we have the summary statement: "the power of sin is the law."

So then the moral law which ought to bring men to salvation leads to an opposite result. In the internecine conflict between the "law in the members" and the "law of the mind" the inward man succumbs, falls into captivity to the law of sin and can only cry for deliverance from this body of death. Being naturally carnal (σάρκινος) man is morally carnal (σαρξινός)—that is, his moral activity is determined by his carnal nature; hence it remains forever impossible that by his utmost endeavor a man should attain to the righteousness required by the Law, and the endeavor leads only to despair.<sup>1</sup> No wonder the Jewish Christians found this a startling proposition. From the

<sup>1</sup> "Sin is for Paul so terrible a power, so immeasurably stronger than the natural will, that he cannot think of it as the result of the freedom of man, but as the cause of his enslavement." Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, i, 280.

Old Testament point of view the Law was given to be obeyed, and the obedience which constituted men's righteousness was of course within their power. All the warnings and exhortations of sages and prophets from age to age were meaningless if righteousness were an ideal to be delighted in but hopeless of realisation. And the notion of sin as a bondage to which the soul is condemned in perpetuity no more accords with the moral intuition of Israel than it does with human experience. Ezekiel assumes the contrary: "If the wicked man will turn from his sins that he hath committed and do that which is right, his transgressions shall not be mentioned unto him." Paul denies that man can turn from sin, and *a fortiori* he is unable to do that which is right. The truth is, the Apostle's contention was for him a doctrinal necessity. He looked from the Cross backward to the Law; righteousness could not be attainable by the works of the Law, for "if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain." He admits that the Law is "holy, just and good,"<sup>1</sup> and that men would become righteous if they obeyed it, but this was just what they could never do. From this impotence it results that "the commandment which was ordained to life is found to be unto death." That is, the effect of the Law is directly contrary to its design; in other words the divine ordinance fails of its purpose. But arriving at this hazardous position, our theologian changes ground and goes on to argue that it was not the object of the Law to make men righteous, but the divine purpose in giving it must be found in its necessary effect, and that is the increase and

<sup>1</sup> This in Romans, although in Galatians those who observe the Law are no better than heathen. And if it be said that the reference in the one case is to the moral and in the other to the ceremonial Law, the answer is that the Apostle never recognises any such distinction; in his eyes the Law is an indivisible whole of divine revelation.

intensification of sin. As we have seen, law is not only powerless to make men righteous, it conspires with the flesh against him and is active in making him a sinner. It was given, then, the Apostle concludes, for this very purpose, given to make actual what was virtual, to make the latent sinfulness open sin as a violation of law. "The real object of the Law was simply to keep mankind in sin" (Hausrath). "It was added for the sake of transgressions"—that is, to create transgressions (Lightfoot, Gal. iii, 19). "It came in that the trespass might abound"; it is through the commandment that sin becomes exceeding sinful: and sin works death. So then the Law is not only "found" to be unto death, but was "ordained" to death and *not* to life. For a moment this doctrine of law seems to show a cheering aspect when we read, "Where no law is there is no transgression. . . . Sin is not imputed when there is no law." This would seem to clear the Gentiles of all guilt, since the Law was given only to Israel. Yet in the face of this we are told that "as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." The Gentiles, it appears, are responsible to an inward law of conscience, as "knowing the judgment of God that they who commit such things are worthy of death"; and hence "death reigned from Adam to Moses even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression"—that is, against an express commandment. In fact then there is no time or place "where no law is," and always and everywhere sin *is* imputed. The general result appears to be that as concerns sin it does not really matter whether there is law or no law. It seems unnecessary that law should be added to create transgressions, since with or without it all mankind are "concluded under sin."

In the Apostle's deliverances concerning death we find the same vacillation as in the case of sin between two different points of view. On the one hand, it is of his

constitution that man is mortal; by the necessity of his nature he is subject to death. The first man is of the earth, earthy, and in Adam all die. On the other hand, that death came upon men as the penalty of sin is a proposition essential to the Apostle's theological scheme, with its two successive dispensations, that of sin and death which begins with the progenitor of the human family, and that of redemption to life whose head is the second Adam, the Man from heaven. These are conflicting views. It is disconcerting to find the Apostle at one time holding with the old Hebraism that death is the fate of man as man, and in no wise conditional upon his action, and at another that it is the divine judgment upon sin. It may be remarked in passing that if we accept the Pauline theology, any divine judgment upon sin must appear the height of injustice. Whether sin belongs essentially to the human nature man has received from his Creator, or to the corrupted nature he has inherited from his primeval ancestor, in neither case can man be guilty, for it is not his sin. It is not chargeable to his free activity and therefore he cannot be held responsible for it. He cannot justly be condemned to death for simply being the thing he was made to be. Rather he might indignantly demand by what right did God give him a sinful nature, directly or through another, and then hold him an object of His wrath for having it.

Let us note that if we are careful not to read our thoughts into the mind of Paul we shall not find him using the word death in a figurative sense to signify loss of spiritual vitality, of the will to do good. Death in the passage, "to be carnally minded is death," means simply physical death, final extinction, without possibility of a resurrection life. This is the inevitable end of the mind of the flesh which is "enmity against God"; and the Jew, with his horror of death more intense than that of any other

race of men, could scarcely conceive a more appalling fate. So with the antithetic term: the "life" given at the resurrection is not a spiritual regeneration, but the clothing of the man who dies in Christ with a body of glory for the new Kingdom. Life, the miraculous transformation of a mortal nature, is for "those who are Christ's at his coming." When the trumpet shall sound at the last day the dead will be raised incorruptible—in the spiritual body—and the living will be "changed" correspondingly by the putting on of incorruption. It is above all the believers' relation to Christ at the Parousia that preoccupies the Apostle's thought, and his hope repeatedly expressed is that they will be found "unreproveable in the day of the Lord." He tells them that if the Spirit dwells in them it will quicken their mortal bodies; *therefore* they should not live after the flesh. They should walk in newness of life, *for* if they have become united with Christ in his death they will be also in his resurrection. The Pauline terms "death" and "life" will be misunderstood if they are not interpreted in the light of the messianic eschatology. It is in reference to the approaching "end" which fixes the gaze of the Apostle that these terms receive their intense significance and all else becomes dust in the balance. The gift of eternal life means admission to the messianic Kingdom which flesh and blood cannot inherit, and to joys it hath not entered the heart of man to conceive. And this becomes the goal of the believers' striving. All their steadfastness, their hoping, their enduring, their eager waiting for the coming of the Lord are animated and sustained by their assurance that they shall be "glorified with him." Thus it becomes evident that the righteousness of the Christian is not regarded as an end in itself, but its end is thrown forward to the great consummation in the "day of the Lord." It is Life that is the highest end. Right-



eousness is the means through which "grace reigns unto eternal life," and the "justification of life" is such an attribution of righteousness as will pass the Christian through the gates of the Kingdom.

Evidently then the meaning of "Salvation" in the Apostle's terminology is determined by that of life and death to which it relates. Salvation is clearly an eschatological term and stands for deliverance from that worst of evils, the messianic "perishing" or "destruction," and entrance into the resurrection life, freed from subjection to the body. Nothing is plainer than that salvation belongs to the messianic "age to come." He that is to be saved will be "saved in the day of the Lord," and what we have here is the promise and the hope of salvation. If the Gentiles have turned from idols to serve the living God, it is to "wait for his Son from heaven who delivers us from the wrath to come." As with pious Jews, like Simeon of St. Luke's gospel, this "waiting" would seem to be the Christian's occupation. Life in the body, in "this present evil world," was something merely to escape from: "Our citizenship is in heaven whence we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory." Salvation then is primarily not salvation from sin, but from the penalty of sin. It does not relate to character; it is not something to be achieved; it is a gracious gift of God to those whom He has "elected."

Coming now to what is called the "plan of salvation," we find to begin with that all men are "under sin," and hence the relation between man and God is one of mutual hostility. Sinful men are "enemies" of God, and "the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men." The human race is doomed to destruction and nothing can save it but the Atonement of the Christ.



The object of his death is to counteract the effects of Adam's sin and so bring about a reconciliation of God and man. It is not St. Paul's teaching that a change of man's disposition toward God would be all-sufficient to this end. On the contrary the change of disposition on God's part, which is wrought by the Atonement, is the sole effect of the transaction. He would not lay aside the wrath that pursues the sinner to destruction until the demands of His justice were satisfied by the atoning sacrifice through which "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law." To redeem is to buy off: by his death Christ pays the price of men's deliverance from bondage to the Law, whose curse, the doom of death, rests upon the unhappy race which by its very nature is incapable of obeying it. The ransom is evidently paid to the Law, the abstraction of divine justice—"personified as a tyrannic power" (Pfleiderer)—and the Law, being once for all satisfied, is abolished: "Christ is the end of the Law." We may note in passing the curious arguments that lead to this conclusion. It was written that the transgressor of the Law is accursed, and accursed also is everyone that is hanged upon a tree. Christ who hung upon the tree became a curse for us; thus our transgression has received its punishment and we are freed from the Law. Then there is the analogy of the marriage relation. Death puts an end to marriage, and in like manner we who in the death of Christ are dead to the Law are now free men. Now Jesus is indeed the end of the Law, for the religion of the spirit which he taught is in itself the transcendence of legalism, but "this manner of argumentation, how vain and naught it is, everyone that hath wit perceiveth."

In the same manner as from the Law men are redeemed from bondage to sin. Christ "died unto sin," a sort of quasi-personal ruling power—a "demonic spiritual being" (Pfleiderer)—which claims the death of mankind. By

his death he satisfies and annuls this claim, pays the tribute which was due, and brings to an end the dominion of sin. According to the principle of solidarity this substitutional sacrifice is the act of a representative of mankind in which mankind participates. "If one died for all, then all died"; that is, the Christ's real death is ideally the death of all men. He suffered the condemnation of sin in the flesh, died unto sin "once," and in virtue of their ideal dying in his death men are "freed from sin, and being now justified by his blood they will be saved from wrath through him." Sin appears to be the germinal principle of Paul's theology from which it all develops. It is the doctrine of sin that necessitates all the machinery of external contrivances to effect a reconciliation of God and man which but for that doctrine were needless; and then as the issue of a series of mystical transactions in which he himself takes no part, but which "enable him to settle with the Shylock in the skies," a man is brought into the status of "justification." We hear no echo of Jesus' words, thy sins are forgiven thee; forgiveness is a matter of personal relations; law knows no forgiveness, Justification means acquittal at the messianic judgment; at the same time, the justified are not only pronounced guiltless, but on the principle of imputation of merit, they are accounted righteous. They are

accepted as righteous freely by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth in his blood as a propitiation, through faith, in order to manifest (both) His righteousness on account of His passing over in His forbearance the sins committed in former times, and His righteousness at the present time; so that He may be righteous and accept as righteous him who believeth.

In His passing over unpunished the sins of pre-Christian times the righteousness of God was in abeyance and

indiscernible, but now the pains of the guiltless sufferer, having a retroactive efficacy, show that He is at once just in requiring an atonement and has the right to be gracious in becoming "the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." That is, though the divine justice might be called in question for apparently pardoning the guilty, it is now vindicated by His punishing the innocent. A modern theologian will find it hard to found on any rational principle the singular doctrine of the text, but for one with no dogmatic interest to serve these are simply the speculations of a Jew of the first century striving to adapt the theories of the Schools to assumed facts, and he will be content to take them as he finds them.

It was the messianic doctrine that only the righteous could gain admission to the Kingdom. Paul finds this proposition confronted by two others equally indisputable: that no man is by nature righteous, and that no man can become righteous by any efforts of his own. It follows that his righteousness must be accomplished by the Messiah himself. And so while Pharisaic theology held that the Messiah would only come when the people should be found obedient to the law of righteousness, according to Paul he comes to bring them righteousness. What in one doctrine is the condition of the coming in the other becomes its effect. Adopting the idea of the transference of merit which runs all through the Old Testament,<sup>1</sup> Paul assumes an imputation of Christ's righteousness to man consequent upon that of man's sin to Christ: God "made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him." That is, Christ takes men's sin and men take his righteousness. It is all a legal fiction: men are

<sup>1</sup> It was developed in detail in the later theology, and the doctrine that the credit balance of holy men might be made over to needy sinners passed thence to the Christian Church.

still as far from being really righteous as Christ is from being really a sinner. There being no such thing, a man's personal righteousness has nothing to do with the divine decree of his justification. Having none of his own he "appropriates" that of another, and the righteousness of Christ is put to his credit. This is an ethic of burlesque. If morality has any meaning the notion that righteousness can be handed over as a present from one person to another is in the strict sense of the word absurd.

We must turn to another side of the Apostle's doctrine to complete our view of it, though the trouble is the two sides go very ill together. There are two further points in this theory of the Atonement which, however inconsistent they may be with its underlying principles, are nevertheless a part of it. In the first place, it is a surprise to learn that it is the inexorable God of justice and wrath who out of His love for sinners has Himself devised the plan of atonement for human sin. The Cross is no longer witness to the stern demand of offended justice, but the symbol of divine "grace." Here we encounter a flat contradiction. "For the Apostle the wrath of God against sinners was a reality to reconcile which with the fact that He had given His Son to die for them was a puzzle he saw no way to solve."<sup>1</sup> And there is no solution: it is impossible to maintain both doctrines at once. In this new aspect the harshness and hardness of the doctrine of atonement disappear, but along with these the doctrine itself disappears and the whole exposition of it falls to the ground. The love of God who gave His own Son to die for us annuls the presupposition of the atonement theory and does away with all necessity for propitiatory sacrifice to appease a wrathful Deity. The Christ has effected no reconciliation of God to man,

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 398.

for the reconciliation antedates his sacrifice, and that sacrifice becomes superfluous and meaningless. A loving God is a forgiving God, one who knowing our frame and remembering that we are dust will put our sins away from us as far as the East is from the West. It is another God who insists upon the death of a victim and will grant no remission without shedding of blood. These two Gods, who logically cancel one another, appear as one in the Pentateuch, where we read of "the Lord merciful and gracious that will by no means clear the guilty"; and the dualistic conception seems to result from the persistence of antithetic states of religious feeling. Hence arises the anthropomorphic distinction between the justice and the mercy of God, and the inconsistency of the Pauline theory of redemption results from these conflicting elements of the divine nature as thus misapprehended.

In the second place, it belongs to the theory of atonement that the beneficiaries are passive recipients of the absolution gained by the vicarious sacrifice, and it comes to them unconditionally. Such is the theory which Paul sets forth, and according to this mankind has nothing to do in the Atonement, the entire transaction being conducted by God and the Christ. It is an objective act of propitiation on behalf of all men, or ideally by all men as represented in their Head. To this view of the matter as something taking place apart from the individual, or over his head, Paul does not adhere. He brings forward a subjective complement as necessary to the efficacy of the Atonement. Its benefits are not unconditional, but accrue only to those who have "faith" in Christ. Upon all others will come "sudden destruction in the day of the Lord." Justification by his blood is something only offered to all men, but not accepted by all and of no avail to those who do not accept it. Two comments suggest



themselves: We have been taught that the second Adam comes to repair the evil wrought by the first, and as the one brought death upon humanity, it is to humanity that the other brings salvation: "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Now it appears that deliverance from death is not a common gift to all inheritors of Adam's guilt, but only to the group of believers in Jesus as the Christ. Again, the ideas of substitution and representation rest on that of clan solidarity: they belong to a time when the individual has no existence as such, but is only a member of the clan; and hence the notion that the efficacy of an atoning sacrifice is conditioned by any subjective belief is an anachronism which has no place in the judicial theory of atonement, or rather it destroys its foundation and wrecks it altogether. Since however to Paul's mind the divine plan of salvation centres in the Cross, he cannot abandon that theory, and his exposition includes the radical inconsistency of this conditioning faith. It is *because* of the sacrificial death of Christ—the satisfaction of the Law, the condemnation of sin in the flesh—that the Christian is reckoned righteous *on condition* of his faith. This is to limit the scope of the Atonement, but not to change the ground of justification. That remains the free gift of God, just as the Atonement is His provision, and the subjective factor, though indispensable, is not productively effective. In Paul's theology this faith which is demanded of the Christian is simply assent to the preaching of redemption and acceptance of Christ as his Saviour (Rom. iv, 24–25). With this the death and resurrection of Christ are automatically transferred to the faithful, so that they too are dead and risen again. Thus the believer's attitude toward his justification remains purely receptive. Indeed faith itself is of grace; it is the gift of God to whomsoever He will. If it were an action it would be a spiritual



action, and of such the flesh which lusteth against the spirit is incapable.

The doctrines of grace and predestination exclude any co-operation on the part of man in the work of redemption. If God determines who is to belong to the saved and to the lost, then faith as a condition of salvation must be reckoned as part of that which God decrees.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the believer is simply brought into a new relation to God who is pleased to declare him righteous "without the deeds of the Law." That is, apart from his actual righteousness, without regard to his moral character, faith is reckoned as the equivalent of a devoted obedience to the moral law. This unmoral doctrine of justification by faith, with its disparagement of "works" as futile, has well been called one of St. Paul's most disastrous creations, for nothing has done more to divorce religion from morality.

It is true that in the Apostle's own experience the term faith passes from theology to religion, and signifies a realising in the personal soul of that union with the Christ which on the theory of representation is only generic and ideal. In this mystical communion the Christian feels that it is no longer he that lives, but the Christ, or the Spirit of God, that lives within him, and from a "new creation" issues a life of holiness. St. Paul's religion, like all that is in truth religion, is deep and true and vital. For himself, as afterwards for Luther, the righteousness of faith was a living reality. Yet psychologically the Pauline faith is the *feeling* of the soul's union with Christ, and there is danger in merging all in the element of feeling; for the generality of men the Pauline mysticism is apt to prove a delusion and a snare.

<sup>1</sup> Wernle, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, i, 269.

Again, the missionary activities of the Apostle compel him to lay aside his theoretical determinism, and his ethical teaching is an urgent call to self-discipline and the higher life. Yet these exhortations to the Christian virtues, implying a recognition of free will and moral obligation, touch a note strangely discordant with the theological expositions amidst which they occur, for in truth his theology does not allow of any ethical teaching whatever. The natural man, it declares, is powerless under his servitude to the flesh and its indwelling sinfulness; he cannot liberate himself, nor escape the doom of sin. He must be saved by another, and the whole process of salvation becomes a supernatural one. The laws of moral and religious growth are set aside, and a righteousness unattainable by man is supernaturally conferred upon him; for since the Christ died unto sin that reigned unto death and to the Law that made sin "abound," it is now possible to introduce a new world-order, the reign of grace and imputed righteousness unto eternal life. In all this there is no place for human freedom. Man is clay in the hands of the potter, and all is of God: "Whom He did predestinate He also called, and whom He called He also justified, and whom He justified He also glorified."<sup>1</sup> If then we find St. Paul condemning men for their evil conduct, or urging them to the activities of righteousness, quite as if he looked on them as moral agents, and not as the stone that is thrown and thinks it flies, we see that the theory of supernaturalism cannot stand the

<sup>1</sup> "The nomination of men to salvation or perdition is quite as arbitrary a proceeding as a potter's decision respecting the shape of a pitcher. God 'hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth.' Men are therefore irresponsible automata controlled by destiny, and no presumptuous mortal has any right to question the divine justice which determines the perdition of unborn millions as a foregone conclusion, and limits salvation to a divinely chosen minority." *The Evolution of Christianity*, 393.

strain put upon it by the exigencies of practical life, and we find that the righteousness of works, so vehemently repudiated in favor of a justification without them, comes to its rights again. We meet continually this antinomy of a twofold righteousness, one imputed and one real, and we recognise that sometimes the Apostle is writing under the obsession of a dogmatic thesis, and sometimes from the standpoint of actual experience; is now giving us the subtle artificialities of his modified Rabbinism, and now living words that spring from the intense earnestness of his own spiritual nature.

Personally the glorious Apostle commands our fervent admiration; save one there is scarcely a greater name in human history. His theology—that theology which has shaped the thought of Christendom all through the ages—is another matter. It was the Jewish theology in which Paul had been educated with modifications from his ideas concerning the death and resurrection of the Christ. Paul remained a Jewish thinker, and the forms of Jewish thought continued to mould and to limit the dogmatic process by which the Christian religion was substituted for the religion of Jesus. The whole messianic eschatology; the two contrasted æons, the earthly present and the heavenly future; the doctrine of angels and demons; the theories of predestination and God's arbitrary will; of ethical pessimism and the universality of sin; of Adam's fall as the fall of all men; of death as the wages of sin—all this is part of the heritage from Judaism, "and it is a very irony that such specifically Jewish ideas are to-day widely regarded as specifically Christian."<sup>1</sup> It is the profoundly pessimistic thought of later Judaism that appears in Paul's gloomy outlook upon a world lying under the blight of God's curse and the menace of His wrath,

<sup>1</sup> Wrede, *Paul*, 141.

in which he sees only the ruin wrought by sin and the fatality that chains man to the life of sense. These pessimistic postulates are a necessity to his theory of redemption.<sup>1</sup> From this black evil of man's natural state only a supernatural deliverance can rescue him. It is here that Paul incurs responsibility for a fatal delusion which has betrayed generations of Christian men: the delusion that to save oneself is impossible and is not necessary, for the verb is to be construed in the passive voice and men will be saved by a power outside themselves. The truth is plain and irreversible that no man's soul can be saved by another; the only salvation we can know is self-regeneration.<sup>2</sup> The whole Pauline scheme of redemption by the atoning death of Christ, a transaction quite apart from the individual soul, wears a cold and artificial look, and more than that, to plain people whose moral intuitions have not been silenced by a doctrine supposedly inspired it must appear fantastic, irrational and absurd. Its legal, or "forensic," aspect masks the wild justice of primitive barbarism which held that the proper demand of an injured dignitary was a fixed equivalent of suffering, and that it mattered not that punishment should fall on the culprit, but only that it should fall upon someone.<sup>3</sup> Equally lacking in common sense and

<sup>1</sup> "Paul violently extinguished every other light in the world so that Christ might shine in it alone." Wernle, *op. cit.*, i, 237.

<sup>2</sup> "The implicit recognition of human autonomy in the teaching of Jesus is as much as to say that his method of deliverance from evil is auto-soteric—in plain terms a process of self-extrication, of self-redemption—a process which can be carried out only by that struggle of man himself with his own lower nature of which the Cross is the symbol." Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 80.

<sup>3</sup> At the Episcopal Church Congress of 1885 one of the writers reminded the audience that Jesus' teaching concerning the forgiveness of sin was to be found in the parable of the Prodigal Son, and he added the remark: "If we find anywhere in the New Testament a teaching contrary to this, we are to remember that we have but one Master." Whereupon a zealous

equally offensive to the moral instincts is the cognate theory of justification by the blood of the guiltless, of a righteousness imputed and the appropriation of another's merits. If men of modern education are told that their relations to God are ordered on such principles as these, it will depend upon their temperament whether they respond with indignant protest or with derisive merriment.<sup>1</sup>

It has been the prevalent view that Paulinism is simply the theological exposition of the Gospel of Jesus, that the two differ in form only and not in principle. This shows us, it seems to me, how strongly and how strangely unconscious prepossession can sway the judgment. Can there be a sharper contrast than that between the Apostle's doctrine and the message of Jesus: between the satisfaction for sin by the death of a victim and the free forgiveness of repentant sinners by their loving Father; or between the Pauline righteousness by a legal fiction and the personal righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount?<sup>2</sup>

Christian exclaimed: "After that I don't see how Dr. — can remain in the Episcopal Church." The world seems to have made but slight advance in the two hundred and fifty years since the outcry arose against Grotius for preferring the Gospel of Jesus to the doctrines of theologians, when Voetius declared that "to place the principal part of religion in the observance of Christ's commands is rank Socinianism."

<sup>1</sup> The Pauline doctrine has been summed up in words that render comment superfluous: "God created man in simplicity and ignorance, placed at his disposal the means of his Fall, left him defenseless against the wiles of Satan, condemned the innocent by cursing posterity, denied forgiveness to the penitent unless appeased by blood, consecrated the heathen rite of human sacrifice by the crucifixion of His only Son, limited the boon of expiation to a chosen few, and, finally, effaced all that is noblest in humanity by teaching men to seek His favor, not by righteousness, but through the vicarious sufferings of an innocent man judicially murdered to satisfy divine justice." *The Evolution of Christianity*, 396.

<sup>2</sup> "Sin with its burden lies far away from the disciples of Jesus, and still farther the theology of sin and propitiation. How miserably all those fine-spun theories of sacrifice and vicarious atonement crumble to pieces before his faith in the love of God our Father who so gladly pardons.



Or consider Jesus' view of human life. He was not blind to evil, but he believed it could be eliminated from the soul by arduous struggle. If there were sin and sorrow in the world, so also there were happiness and goodness. These were the positive realities, and all that was negative, that was not of the good and loving God, was temporal, provisional, and sooner or later would pass away. Compare the Pauline view: the heavy cloud of sin that overshadows the earth; the nightmare horror of the vain struggle with the flesh; the inevitable doom of the evil world incapable of regeneration; the universal reign of death and the race going down to destruction. It all seems the product of a diseased imagination. But if these frightful evils of man's natural condition are only imaginary, there is no need to imagine a supernatural remedy. In the light of the Gospel these morbid terrors of sin and death are scattered like morning mist. The fear of perishing forever like the brute unless miraculously saved vanishes before the sublime intuition of Jesus: "He is not a God of the dead, but of the living"; and we feel that His very being certifies our immortality, that a God who could let us die would not be God. The pessimistic contemplation of the world gives way to that confident, exultant faith in the future of mankind for which Jesus stands pre-eminent among the sons of hope. And when we listen to his voice revealing the fatherly heart of the forgiving God, the vision of sin as a vast, all-ruling power

---

The one parable of the Prodigal Son wipes them all off the slate." Wernle, *op. cit.*, 109.

"For Jesus man's ideal of righteousness is God; for Paul the glorified Christ. Jesus accepts man's righteousness, purified by spirituality; Paul rejects human righteousness as necessarily impure and substitutes the perfect righteousness of the Christ imputed on condition of faith. Jesus thinks of an inward transformation wrought by the communion of man's will with God's; Paul demands a new creation of humanity." Toy, *Christianity and Judaism*, 281.



enthroned above a prostrate humanity is but an evil dream, gone when one awaketh.<sup>1</sup> Jesus looked on the creation and saw that it was good. The smile on the face of Nature seemed its acknowledgment of the good God whose mercy is over all His works, who clothes the flowers with beauty and feeds the birds of the air and watches over the fallen sparrow. To Paul the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain. To him the lilies of the field bear no message of the Divine, and if it was written in God's Law, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," the meaning of that figure is that Christian missionaries have a claim to be supported by the churches; for, "Doth God take care for oxen?" Children speak to the heart of Jesus; Paul does not seem aware of their existence; and the loving Father whose will it is that not one of His little ones shall perish we cannot recognise in the divine despot who determinates the destiny of his creatures by the caprice of one who has the potter's power over the clay.

Paul would construct a Christian theology to supplant the Jewish, and meeting the ideas of Judaism on its own ground, with weapons taken from its own armory, he used all a lawyer's subtlety in devising an intricate scheme which should relieve the divine custodian of the Law from the technical difficulties in which he was involved. Jesus ignores the old artificial barriers which had been built up between God and man, wastes no time in labored efforts to surmount obstacles that do not exist, but strikes down at once to the real, deep, and simple principles which are

<sup>1</sup> "The change from the midnight gloom of Israel's pessimism to the cloudless sunshine of Jesus' optimistic faith is perhaps the greatest revolution in human thought that a single mind has ever achieved. Or if there is a greater, it is the revolution of which this was at once a vital aspect and a necessary result,—the restoration by the same master-mind of the Divine Presence to the heart of nature and to the soul of man." *The Creed of Christ*, 113.

the roots of the religious life. He tells us that man is by nature the child of God, and in this filial relation, which is primordial, unconditioned by moral criteria, he has his being. This central truth of the Gospel Paul failed to apprehend and his theology is based upon this failure. In his view man's sonship is not a natural, but an artificial relation; it is not immanent and aboriginal, but dependent upon the scheme of atonement. Far from its being universal and unconditional, men are by nature children of wrath and it is only by divine grace that some receive the "adoption" of sons—as in the Roman law of adoption one who was not a member of the family became such by the act of the *paterfamilias*. "Adoption is a distinctively characteristic idea of Paulinism and sums up all that distinguishes it from the teaching of Jesus" (A. Réville). God is not our Father from all eternity, but in the fulness of time He assumed the position of Father to a portion of mankind—His elect who are justified through faith in redemption by the blood of Christ. "Father is not the primitive cry of humanity which all men may utter; it is a title which Christ has gained permission for the elect to use" (Weiss).

At every point the contrast declares itself between Jesus and his so-called expositor. Jesus insists upon moral reformation as a man's own work; with Paul liberation from sin is an act of God's grace, and his demand is that men shall believe in a series of divine acts. Jesus aims at personal character and the heart of his preaching is its moral appeal: Ye cannot serve God and Mammon; no man who has put his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God; if thine eye tempt thee to offend, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For Paul such injunctions are superfluous, since Christ has been delivered up for our offenses and raised for our justification. Jesus calls on men to live up to the truth

of a nature one in kind with the nature of their Father: Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Paul writes: Christ is made unto us righteousness and sanctification. Jesus urges men to a "metanoia," a life-giving change of the inner man, not as sinners but as needing whether sinners or not to change in themselves, in their inmost soul, through consciousness of their sonship to God. He assumes the will-power, the spiritual energy, to make the change. That is his starting-point. Go down into what you are, he says; it is not outward obedience to the right that counts, but the man himself. Paul transforms this insufficiency of mere obedience into man's inability to obey. Your righteousness, said Jesus, must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. Paul said: the Pharisaic righteousness exceeds our powers. We are impotent, helpless, sold as slaves to sin; man is unchangeable and the metanoia is impossible. And that is his starting-point of a supernatural scheme for man's salvation at the hands of another. We read that Jesus said: "My words shall not pass away," but the greatest of the Christian missionaries seems not to know that he had ever spoken. He called himself an Apostle of Jesus Christ, but the Being whose Apostle he professed to be was not the real Jesus of history.

And what of him? The Man who lived on earth, whose life and work it is our conviction are the most momentous facts in human history, Paul displaces by a dead and risen Messiah, the creation of Jewish fantasy remodeled to meet the requirements of a plan of salvation apart from the works of the Law. While popular expectation saw in the Messiah the Lion of the tribe of Judah who should break the heathen in pieces like a potter's vessel, Paul identified him with the Philonic heavenly Man who existed "in the form of God" before the creation of the world, and thus the speculations of the Alexandrine

eclectic became fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. If nothing more than Paul's writings had come down to us from the first Christians we should never have learned that such a man as Jesus had really lived. That intensely impressive personality is taken out of the conditions of humanity and, as in a dissolving view, melts into the shadowy figure of a celestial spirit-being who descends to earth in the likeness of men that he may die and by his rising from the dead become the head of a new world-order of supernatural life for as many as shall believe in him. Such a Christian Saviour might be readily accepted by the pagan world as a divine being emanating from the "abundance of deity," and hence the first step toward those Docetic teachings of the Gnostics which a century later threatened to dissolve the Christian religion into a mythical dream-picture was taken by the Apostle Paul.

Let us turn back to Jesus. In the synoptic story he does not make himself the centre of his Gospel; it is not his person but his message that he presses on men's acceptance: He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them is like a man that builds upon the rock. . . . Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom, but he that doeth the will of the Father.<sup>1</sup> This man of God arrogates no exceptional superiority in dignity or sanctity, but ranks himself with the run of his fellow-men: Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God. Jesus strove to bring men to the Father, but that they could only come through him—that some personal relation to himself was the necessary condition of entrance into true relations with God—he never dreamed. Paul the Jew did not believe

<sup>1</sup> "Son œuvre était l'essentiel; sa personne s'effaçait devant elle. Les conditions d'entrée dans le royaume de Dieu ne font pas mention de la foi en lui; le paulinisme est encore loin." A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, ii, 198.

in a free approach to God, and his Christology was elaborated to bridge the gulf between human and divine which to Jesus was non-existent. Jesus tells us that the soul stands face to face with God: Paul interposes a third party to "reconcile" Father and child.<sup>1</sup> Christ the Mediator at the right hand of God, making intercession for us (Rom. viii, 34), is a wholly Pauline creation. It was impossible for Jesus to admit the necessity of any mediation, for their immediate communion with the heavenly Father was precisely his message to mankind. Yet Paul rather than Jesus has been the teacher of Christendom, and our petitions are still sent "through Jesus Christ our Lord," although in the prayer he taught his disciples there is no word of his advocacy, nor any mention of his name. The Logos of the fourth gospel is truer to Jesus than the Pauline Christ when he tells the believers: "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." The God of Jesus and of his preaching is this heavenly Father. In Paulinism He receives acknowledgment, but the real God of Paul and of the Christian religion, is the Christ. Paul's communion with the Divine was his life "in Christ," and the religious "experience" of Christians has been that of Paul.

<sup>1</sup> "The Pauline doctrine teaches that communion with God is afforded by the continual mediation of a Being in whom are united the antique conception of a Son of God, the Hellenic conception of a nature half divine, half human, and the Jewish conception of the Messiah." Meyer, *op. cit.*, 120.

The notion of a mediator, whether the Pauline Christ, the Logos of Philo, or the World-Soul of Plotinus, is in itself a futile one. If you face, or fancy that you face, a dualism of exclusive opposites, you cannot escape from it by the device of an intermediary. For such intermediary, as sharing the nature of the contradictory elements, will contain them both; that is, the dualism will reappear within it. A dualism is only resolved in a unity which embraces both the opposites as constituents of its own essential difference—correlatives that merge in self-relation.



With the doctrine of "redemption" substituted for the teachings of Jesus, with the "perverse proceeding" (Harnack) that made the Gospel into a Christology, all came to depend upon a correct understanding of the person and work of the Christ; and the "gospel" of Paul led way to the eclipse of religion in the violence of later theological controversy. In that gospel "faith" silently changes to *the* faith, a creed; hence it becomes a barrier of separation between men, and outside the Church, the community of believers in the Word of the Cross, there is no salvation. We find Jesus silent as to matters metaphysical, but these are the Apostle's chosen field, and he knows all about the divine eternal purposes, as if God were "a man in the next street." The dogma of the Atonement, the starting-point of the whole system, is nothing else than an unverifiable speculation, or hypothesis, in regard to the assumed purpose of Christ's death, but it is given out as a divine oracle. The founder of Christian theology is the first to exhibit that amazing self-confidence in his ability to elucidate all mysteries in heaven above and earth beneath which ever since has been the distinguishing mark of the theologian. It was the not unreasonable complaint of a later day that in the Apostle's Letters were "some things hard to be understood," but while theology may be a more or less difficult study for the wise and prudent, we have the word of Jesus—"our Saviour from the theologians"—that the open secrets of religion, of life, are hidden from them to be revealed to babes. The Gospel shows the open way to God our Father. Man is organised for direct intercourse with God, and a man without the natural capacity for this would be less than human. Jesus found it an unused power, and dying out for want of use, and his word called it into exercise, called men to that life of conscious union with God in heart and will which is the one need of the soul. Here is truth



infinitely deep and exquisitely simple: the ultimate truth of all theology and anthropology, yet verifiable in the experience of a child. It is always so with the sayings of Jesus. Deep as the unsounded seas, they are always simple, sane, reasonable, self-evident; and always they carry with them something free and buoyant, something of the open air that reminds us how birds and flowers were his delight. How far away from them we travel when we go from the gospels to the epistles, to the tortuous mazes of the Pauline speculation and the strained and anxious workings of the writer's mind! When ye pray use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. What man is there of you who if his son ask bread will give him a stone? All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, and your Father in heaven will also forgive you. Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is a teaching that needs no learned commentators to expound—with much disagreement among themselves.

It would be easy to enlarge indefinitely upon the "gross and palpable" difference between the teaching of Paul and that of Jesus, but if it were merely a question of their difference, as of that between the Pauline and Judeo-Christian theologies, it would not be a matter of importance. The important point is the disastrous effect of the one upon the other. The important point is the metamorphosis which the Gospel has undergone at the hands of the Apostle, or rather the substitution of a heterosoteric supernaturalism for the religion of free will and personal life.

The second founder of Christianity has, compared with the

first, exercised beyond all doubt the stronger—not the better—influence. He has thrust the greater person whom he meant to serve into the background. Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, Luther, Calvin—not one of these great teachers can be understood on the ground of the preaching and the historic personality of Jesus; the key to their comprehension, with sundry links between, is Paul.<sup>1</sup>

And so the contrast brought before us is one to which we should direct our serious thought, for it speaks to us, if we will hear it, in the words of Israel's leader: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." And choose indeed we must: unless the Kingdom of the truth can stand divided against itself we cannot be disciples at once of Paul the theologian and of Jesus the Son of Man.

<sup>1</sup> Wrede, *Paul*, 180.

## IV

### Catholicism

#### *I. The Perpetuation of Judaism*

THERE can scarcely be a more interesting field of study than is offered by the ages of transition from the world of imperial Rome to the confines of the medieval world, when the institutions and traditions of classical antiquity were declining and passing away, when the ideas, standards, and sentiments of men, their habit of mind, their mental outlook, their type of character were slowly undergoing a complete transformation. It was during these ages that the rise and growth of the Catholic Church took place, itself a potent factor in the changes of the time, by which in turn it was profoundly influenced. Yet of all the far-reaching changes in human thought and life none is more complete than that earlier one within the Church itself, the transformation of primitive Christianity, which in the main was effected during the second century. If the devoted Aristarchus could have revisited the Church of Rome a century or more after his master's martyrdom he would have found nothing but its name familiar to him, and might well have wondered how the simple little community to which the Apostle addressed his famous Letter could have grown into this imposing structure of ecclesiastical organisation.

A familiar argument in behalf of the legitimacy of Catholicism is based on the doctrine of development. If this term be taken as equivalent to evolution, a process said to account for the origin of species—that is, one leading to the production of new and diverse organic forms—no doubt Christian history may be regarded as such a development. But if we are to understand a biological development, simply a process of expansion, of enlarging and filling out a miniature organism—and that is what Newman had in mind—then the analogy seems questionable. It must indeed be said of anything that has life and a history that its whole content is not realised in its primitive condition, but in its developed maturity. Jesus declared that his word was as seed sown in the field of the world. It was to grow by assimilating to itself such elements as it found there, and it was subject to the changes and modifications incident to growth. We may freely admit this view of the Gospel as a germ to be unfolded in the life of the Church, but we have always this test of a true development. Whatever changes time effects, throughout them all an organic being remains itself; no variation can evolve to alter its identity or break the continuity of its existence. And furthermore, a true development is that which fulfils the end, or latent purpose, of the organism; it must follow a course that leads to and discloses the fulfilment of the purpose of the life of the organism. The question is, do we find this continuity of sameness between the teachings of Jesus and the later religion given to men in his name, and do we find in the Christian religion a fulfilment of the end and aim of those teachings; or has the growth of that religion been largely shaped by foreign influences, has it taken into itself many discordant elements from the old religions, and far from assimilating them, surrendered to their dominance, and has it followed aberrant lines of develop-

ment which have brought it at essential points to a contradiction of the Gospel in its spirit and principles?

To begin with, there ought to be nothing plainer to the Bible student than the radical opposition of the Gospel of Jesus to the religious system of the Jews; and if this passed unobserved by the simple villagers of Galilee, held by the charm of his discourse about the loving God and the goodness He asked for in His children, Pharisees and Sadducees were quick to perceive the dangerous attack upon their cherished principles, and they made no mistake when they took strong measures to suppress the pernicious activities of the Prophet. It follows that in so far as the Christian religion was a perpetuation of Judaism it failed to be a development of the religion of Jesus. We must understand that the first disciples were Jews, not Christians of the type of a later day. They had added to their Judaism a belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and this belief bound them together by a special tie and inspired a warm sentiment of brotherhood which sought expression in their meetings for prayer and the Apostles' teaching, in their common meals where the Lord's death was commemorated in the breaking of bread, and in sharing with the poor their worldly goods—a communistic experiment which time was soon to condemn. All this was wholly consonant with loyalty to their religion, and there was no thought of a separatist movement. "They desired to be nothing more than the Messiah-believing nucleus of the Jewish people."<sup>1</sup> They felt no need of forsaking Moses in order to follow their Master, since for them the Gospel of the Kingdom was not a new revelation but the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets. Their only point of difference from other Jews touched a question of fact, not of principle, and the mere reference of the messianic hope to Jesus did nothing to take them outside

<sup>1</sup> Pfeiderer, *Christian Origins*, 146.

the bounds of Judaism.<sup>1</sup> Indeed their more definite expectation of the Messiah's speedy coming inspired a surpassing zeal in the works of the Law. Regular in attendance at the Temple, strict in observance of the Sabbath, scrupulous in regard to all legal prescriptions, the exemplary piety of these new sectaries gained them the favor of the Pharisees and the esteem of all Jews.<sup>2</sup> Such an attitude on the part of Jesus' own followers seems strange to us, but we must bear in mind that the time allowed for their education in the Gospel was very short. To comprehend its principles in all their far-reaching issues, to see how its revelation acted as a solvent on the old beliefs of the world and made all things new, necessitated such a change in the whole mental view of these votaries of a divinely given national religion as could not be wrought in the space of a single year.<sup>3</sup> Nor was Jesus' method with them such as to hasten the change. He did not come to destroy, to make a violent break with

<sup>1</sup> In the view of the *Clementines*, "the Jews erred respecting the Lord's first coming, and this is really the only difference between us and them. For that a Messiah is to come they believe as well as we; the only point of disagreement is as to his having already appeared in humble guise."

<sup>2</sup> "If we wish to appreciate justly the earliest church which gathered in Jerusalem round the Twelve, we must think of all its members as pious Jews. The certainty that the Messiah had appeared in Jesus of Nazareth only impelled them to redouble their pious zeal and to strive after the realisation of the Jewish ideal of piety." Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, 141.

<sup>3</sup> Whether the ministry of Jesus was, as Keim argues, of one year's duration or of a somewhat longer period is not a question of great importance. It would seem that events moved swiftly, and above all we cannot suppose that the Pharisees and rulers would tolerate for any length of time a preaching at many points directly and always indirectly subversive of the Law. They would make short work of it as they had of John's; for there can be little doubt that it was at their instigation Antipas ordered the arrest of the Baptist after he had withdrawn from their jurisdiction to Perea. We have words of Jesus that plainly intimate as much (Matt. xvii, 10-12). The story of Herodias and Salome is not in accord with historical facts.



the past. As certain trees are never naked because the old leaves do not fall until the new buds are ready to open, so he would leave undisturbed the cherished convictions of ancient piety until they should fall of themselves before the unfolding of the Gospel principles. His way of changing men's ideas and beliefs was first to change the men themselves, leaving all else to follow. As he passed day by day from one group of hearers to another his living word fell lightly on the old soil of Judaism, and it was left to its germination to break through the deposit of the tradition of the centuries. As to a deeper meaning or a wider scope than was explicit in his sayings, he left that to the reflection of the intelligent with the admonition: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." But of intelligence there was a woeful lack among his followers. It is plain from the gospel story that during their whole companionship there was no trace of intellectual sympathy between Jesus and the dull-minded villagers he made his friends. Under the spell of his magnetic personality they clung to him with dog-like devotion, but their inveterate materialism blocked the access of spiritual truth, and their dense literalness found even his simple metaphors beyond their comprehension. Time and again his words went over their heads, and his thought was a sealed book to them. If the Apostle Paul had been of the Twelve there might have been one to preach the Gospel of Jesus in the wide range of its whole truth and free from complication with rabbinical theology. It must be deemed great loss to him and to the world that he did not know Jesus after the flesh instead of "seeing" him in visions. However we seek to explain it the fact remains that if the disciples had imbibed something of his spirit, they had not entered into the mind of the Master nor grasped the revolutionary implications of his teaching. They could not see that his conflict with Scribes and Phari-

sees was a conflict with the religious system they stood for, and it was left to the alarmed suspicions of his enemies to take the meaning of his saying: "I will destroy this temple made with hands and in three days build another made without hands":

As they themselves had gradually and without any decisive breach with their Jewish way of thought come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, so it appeared to them that in the future the belief in Christ would be perfectly compatible with Judaism. The idea that they could come to be mutually exclusive opposites had not entered their minds.<sup>1</sup>

We cannot fail to see that if the religion of Jesus had been left in the hands of the Jerusalem community under "James, Cephas, and John" it would have perished from the earth in the downfall of the Jewish state. It was from outside their circle, and against their will that the movement started which was to transform the faith of an obscure Jewish sect into the religion of the Greco-Roman world.

The Greek speaking Jews of foreign birth, settled in every quarter of the Empire, could not remain unaffected by their surroundings. In populous cities where met and mingled beliefs, sentiments, and usages the most diverse, where local narrowness and prejudice dissolved in the heat of fusion and assimilation, they tended to become more accessible to new ideas and habituated to freer and broader views than were congenial with the mental habit of Palestine. Racial arrogance and loathing of the Gentile had its root in the national soil and did not flourish as an exotic. In the Holy Land foreign intruders might be banned as "sinners," but abroad relations were reversed; the Jew saw that he was the foreigner, and, rather having need to ask for tolerance than power to withhold

<sup>1</sup> Pfeiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, i, 34.

it, might well be satisfied that in the Greek cities there was room for all and the protection of equal laws. Here in contact with an advanced civilization, in more or less close relations with men of every class and condition, and with his native adaptability to all environments, the Hellenist was, but for his religion, in the way of becoming a thorough cosmopolitan. And even his religion could not altogether escape the influences that were acting upon his thought and life. He remained indeed firmly attached to his ancestral faith, but in his remoteness from the centre of the levitical worship he was free from its deadening formalism, and the prayers and scripture expositions of the Synagogue offered him a more reasonable service than the spectacular rites of the Temple. Converts from Paganism formed an important element in the communities of the Dispersion, and these Proselytes were at once a link between Jews and Gentiles and in some sort a witness to the religion of faith and inward life; for they bore the distinctive name of "devout" men, or "worshippers" of Jehovah, and yet were not submitted to the rule of the ritual law. Again, the influence of Greek thought and culture insensibly modified the religious conceptions of the Hellenists. In Alexandria the attempt was made to bring the doctrines of Judaism into harmony with the prevalent philosophy. A method of allegorical exegesis discovered the hidden sense of Scripture, and an idealistic interpretation of the regulations of the Law represented them as symbols of esoteric truth; and hence, just as modern scientific research creates a new mental atmosphere, and a wider view of the world finds its way to the man in the street, so the speculations of the learned Hellenists brought to men who knew nothing of philosophy general notions of religion larger, more liberal, and more spiritual than ever entered the minds of the Rabbins of Jerusalem. For their part the Palestinian Jews looked

with suspicion and dislike upon men of such training and temper. Detesting the Greek language, despising the Greek Bible, deeming contact with the Gentile a contamination and longing to free the Holy Land from his desecrating intrusion, they were far from sharing the generous hope of the salvation of the Gentile world through Mosaism. The latent antagonism which everywhere divided Greek and Hebrew Jews was now to make its appearance within the community of believers in Jesus the Christ, and with the accession of a body of Hellenists its placid uniformity was troubled by a new and disturbing element. When these newcomers began to give thought to the words and deeds of Jesus, and deeper reflection gathered their import and bearing, the fact that the Gospel addressed itself to men as men, and not to Jews as Jews—that an inward and personal message was as such a message to humanity—could not but reveal itself to their more open and active minds, and hence arose a dissension in the early Church which grew ever more pronounced and bitter as time went on. We read in the Acts that on complaint by the Hellenists of unfairness to their poor in the daily distribution of supplies, the brethren chose seven men of good repute to relieve the Apostles of the charge of this charitable work.<sup>1</sup> As regards the likelihood of partiality, the assembly seems to have gone to the opposite extreme, for the almoners selected to care for the needs of the whole community are all Hellenists, except one who

<sup>1</sup> This proceeding has been regarded as the institution of the Diaconate, but the Diaconate in the later specific sense of the term makes its first appearance in connection with the Episcopate, and was never an independent office. As Deacons, or table-servers, the Seven disappear immediately after their entrance upon the scene, and two of them reappear in quite another character; and when after their flight from Jerusalem the Church loses their services, it does not replace them with others appointed in like manner, as would certainly be its action if they represented an order of the ministry.

is a Greek of Antioch.<sup>1</sup> It soon appears however that the grievance of the Hellenistic widows has nothing to do with the real course of events. Our author promptly drops the fiction of their appointment to serve tables, and represents Stephen and Philip as devoting themselves to preaching the Gospel. "Philip the Evangelist one of the Seven" (Acts xxi, 8: the "We" document) has the same sound as Peter the Apostle one of the Twelve, and such titles seem to designate the leaders of two separate groups within the community. While the circumstances that really led to the coming forward of the Seven are lost to us, it was clearly the result of religious differences between the Hebrews and the Hellenists, and the convictions of the latter led them to an effort to free the new religion from the fetters of the Law. So far as concerned Jerusalem the movement was instantly crushed. Stephen was haled before the Council and accused of blasphemy in declaring that the crucified Messiah would come again to destroy the Temple and abolish the Mosaic institutions. It was the charge that had been brought against Jesus, and from this it may be gathered that the bold Evangelist had gained a clear intelligence of the Master's saying concerning new wine and old skins. His defense, in which he turned accuser, sealed the Martyr's fate, but his work was done; though time was needed to make it evident, he had forced Christianity and Judaism to define themselves and to separate, and his blood was the seed of the Christian Church. It was none of the Hebrew brethren, but certain proselytes, converts of his preaching, who carried Stephen to his burial and mourned him, and the attack that opened at once upon the Hellenists who shared his dangerous views was directed against them alone. The adherents of the Twelve were left unmolested,

<sup>1</sup> Nicolas, whose Gentile-Christian converts are denounced in the Apocalypse under the name of Nicolaitans for their antinomianism.



for they had done nothing to incur hostility, or if they suffered in reputation among the rigid Jews, they might well protest that they were unfairly compromised by associates with whom they had no sympathy. Meanwhile the Hellenists were driven forth to carry the new religion beyond the bounds of Israel, and now here, now there, in the neighboring lands Christian communities sprang into life that opened their arms to everyone who would "believe with all his heart,"—as Philip said to the Ethiopian—and welcomed him without other terms or conditions into the fellowship of Christ.

The opposition between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, though strongly marked, did not at once declare itself irreconcilable. The mission to the Gentiles had come about as the result of Jewish persecution, and not of an open break within the company of believers; the considerable success it achieved might seem to attest the divine favor, and though the Jewish Christians—or Christian Jews, as a modern writer perhaps more accurately names them,<sup>1</sup> found it hard to tolerate the heterodoxy of their fellow Messianists, for a time Jerusalem and Antioch put up with one another as well as might be, like opposite parties in our Church to-day. Such was the position of affairs when one appeared among the Hellenists who, like Shakspeare among the Elizabethan dramatists, so towers above his fellows that he seems to efface them and to stand alone. He carried to the West the spirit of the Hellenist movement in all its breadth and freedom, and his gospel was a definite repudiation of the authority of the Law. At the same time he left to the Apostles of the Circumcision the liberty he claimed for himself. For it was the earnest wish of the great Apostle to maintain the comprehensive unity of all believers in Jesus the Christ, and to this cause indeed he fell a martyr; but the

<sup>1</sup> So Acts xxi, 20: "Thousands of Jews which believe."



logic of the situation was against him, and the antagonism between nationalism and universalism was not to be ignored. The relations of the parties were already becoming more strained when a rushing tide of religious and patriotic feeling swept over Judea in response to the threatened attacks of Caligula, and carried the Jewish Christians with it, drawing them into still closer relations with the national theocracy. With this came the triumph of Judaism in the Holy City. A complete change took place in the constitution of the Mother Church when its government passed from the Twelve to James the Lord's brother and a body of presbyters subordinate to him.<sup>1</sup> Under his leadership during the Pharisaic restoration in the reign of Agrippa, the Jerusalem Christians were growing ever more intensely devoted to the legal ordinances, until the Hellenistic propaganda became an abomination in the eyes of the more extreme, and the demand became insistent that Gentile converts should be brought under submission to the Law. Soon the Judaists took the aggressive, and St. Paul found himself dogged and tormented by the undying enmity which everywhere followed his footsteps to "bewitch" his converts and undo his work. In Galatia and Corinth he maintained himself with difficulty, but in Ephesus his lifelong struggle ended in defeat. There, through perils and sufferings, facing death every day (I Cor. xv, 30-32; II Cor. i, 8) he kept up the unequal conflict until his heroic persistency at last was overborne and he was driven from the city; and then

<sup>1</sup> "James the Just" was a Jewish legalist of the narrowest type, and held in such veneration by the Pharisees that, transported with grief and rage at his execution, they poured forth to meet the procurator on his way from Egypt to demand vengeance on the Sadducean murderers. James was followed in office by Simeon, a cousin of Jesus, in accordance with the custom of Eastern lands that the headship of a religious community should be assigned to the descendants of the founder, a custom which obtained in regard to the successors of Mohammed.

relentless hatred lurked in waiting for the opportunity of his journey to Jerusalem to rouse the storm that overwhelmed him. In Asia all trace of his long labors was swept away. The Judaists took possession of the field, and five years after Paul's death the Apocalypse bore witness to the temper of the new Church of Ephesus.

Up to the fall of Jerusalem the Judaistic party maintained its power and prestige; theirs were the Mother Church, the primitive type of Christianity, the sanction of Jesus' own Disciples, but theirs was inevitably the losing side. It was found impossible to treat the Gentile world as the proselyte of Judaism, burdened with the Law and with a humiliating inferiority to the chosen people. Hence with the rapid spread of Christianity through the chief cities of the Empire it passed from the control of the Christian Jews, and at length they found themselves compelled to modify their opinions or to secede from the Christian community. Many chose the latter alternative, and under the name of Ebionites they came to be regarded as a heretical sect, although their heresy was rather an obstinate orthodoxy; Judaic Christianity became heretical when the Church had advanced beyond it and it refused to move with the age.

And yet though the Christianity of the Hellenist missionaries gained the ultimate victory, the important point for us to note is that after all the issue between them and their Palestinian brethren was a relatively narrow one. The former indeed took a new departure and with them Christianity entered on the first stage of its conquering career; but they too were Jews and while they put aside the Law as an obstacle to the spread of the new religion, they could not but carry with them the ideas and sentiments of their ancestral faith. And therefore, though the predominance of the Jewish party could not outlast the breaking up of the Jerusalem Church, the

spirit of Judaism long remained potently active in Christianity, nor indeed has that religion ever entirely freed itself from this alien influence. What was needed from the outset for the religion of Jesus was a declaration of its absolute incompatibility with the principles of Judaism, and that was not reached even by the great Hellenist of Tarsus. The abolition of the Law he did declare most vigorously, yet a leaven of Judaism remained to work in all his religious thought, and he "never spoke more truly than when he said of himself that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews."<sup>1</sup> In the next generation the opposition of the new faith to the old, so far as it had been emphasised by Paul, was quietly put out of sight as something inessential, or indeed misleading. For the marked distinction between Gentile and Jewish Christians was rapidly disappearing now that the controversy over the Law was a thing of the past, and while one party accepted the *fait accompli* of Gentile predominance, the other clearly felt and expressed their dependence upon the Jewish religion. The Jews, openly hostile, might deny the claim but the Christian controversialists held to the Jewish derivation of their faith, blind to the heaven-wide contrast between the religious principles of the Gospel and those of Judaism; and their Christological apologetic was the first step in a procedure that obscured or obliterated the real points of difference which parted the followers of Jesus from the pupils of the Pharisees. Nothing seemed left to check the undercurrent that was making for the silent assimilation of the Christian religion to that of its adversaries. The Catholicism of the second century smoothed out the traces of the Judeo-Pauline controversy and taught an eclectic Christianity of conciliation and compromise between a purified Judaism and a diluted Paulinism, such as might prove acceptable to men of all minds and dis-

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *The New Testament in the Christian Church*, 11.

positions. Peter and Paul it brought together in amicable harmony, explaining that the Peter rebuked by Paul at Antioch was not the Apostle but one of the seventy disciples. In this amalgamation of Petro-Paulinism, the doctrinal basis of a universal church, Peter represents the moderate intra-Christian Judaism of Catholicity, and the Judaic character of early Roman Christianity is the real significance of the legend that Peter was the founder of the Church of Rome. The complete repudiation of Judaism was left to the advocacy of St. Paul's eminent disciple, whom the Church disowned, and when Marcion rejected the Old Testament altogether and insisted that its God was not the God of Jesus, it was not the only instance of a clearer apprehension of essential Christianity than lay in the view of orthodoxy.

The Jews have been called the People of the Book, but their veneration for their sacred Scriptures was scarcely deeper than that of the early Christians. The Old Testament was a Christian book, and the only "Scripture" of the Apostolic Church. For it was the general conviction that a religion to commend itself must appeal to antiquity: if a religion was divine it must be ancient; and so the Christians endeavored to meet the reproach that their religion was but of yesterday by claiming for it descent from the religious past of Israel. It followed that the Old Testament, which enshrined the divine revelation to men of old, was freely drawn upon to authenticate the new faith, and the Christian convert was urged to the study of those Holy Scriptures which were "able to make him wise unto salvation." The Hebrew Bible became a book of Christian oracles. It could not be doubted that Moses, the prophets, and the psalmists had foreseen and foretold the new dispensation of the Gospel times (John v, 39, 46) and the searching of Scripture under the influence of this assumption could not fail to establish

it triumphantly. The first Christians discovered many a passage of holy writ that predicted the sufferings and death of the Messiah, and Paul calmly states that Christ died and rose again "according to the Scriptures." The dogmatic teaching of the Pauline Letters rests on a foundation of scriptural proof, and the argument sometimes virtually consists in a series of proof texts, as in Galatians iii, 6-16. The testimony of Scripture was the easier to adduce since the Apostle was an adept in all the artifices of rabbinic exposition. It was a far-reaching principle of interpretation that everything in Scripture was "written for our sake," and thus whenever convenient Scripture language could be understood figuratively and history turned to allegory. So we are told, "this Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia"; so the veil on Moses' face may have as required one significance or another, and on a hint from Philo the Apostle can descend to a foolish verbal quibble in support of a Messianic rendering of the phrase "Abraham and his seed." Such a way of dealing with Scripture provides infinite resources by which it can be made to prove anything that is desired.<sup>1</sup>

This appropriation of the Old Testament implied the affiliation of Christianity with the whole Jewish development, and toward the end of the century we find it the prevailing view that the new religion is but the true outcome and fulfilment of the elder—a view to which St. Paul had led the way by declaring that the Christians were the true Israel, the spiritual children of Abraham.<sup>2</sup> This is the contention which the Acts of the Apostles seeks to

<sup>1</sup> An extreme instance of arbitrary quotation appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the writer finds a demonstration of the necessity of the Christ's sacrifice in a psalm which declares that sacrifice and sin-offering God has not required. (Heb. x, 5, 10; Ps. xl, 6-8.)

<sup>2</sup> The Apocalypse is emphatic on this point: it speaks of "those who call themselves Jews but are not"; that is, the name of Jew rightfully belongs to the Christian.



maintain. It was not the author's purpose to effect a compromise between Jewish and Gentile Christianity by means of mutual concessions, as at one time was supposed. Rather than this, the book implies a situation in which such a compromise had already been effected and the question that agitated the first generation, having lost its practical importance, had died out and been forgotten. Acts is meant to be a historical work, but the author's conception of history is one widely different from that of our time. "What he aimed at was not so much the presentation of what had really happened, as the production of a beautiful and edifying picture of ideal truth, which to him, as to the whole of antiquity, seemed infinitely higher than objective reality."<sup>1</sup> It is evident all through the book that what the author has at heart is to remove the impression that Christianity is essentially opposed to the Jewish religion.<sup>2</sup> Anything that points to such opposition at the beginning he cannot or will not see, for he reads the early story in the light of his own present. Peter and Paul are of one mind, and the former is the first Apostle to the Gentiles. Each of the great leaders in turn is the central figure in one half of the work, suggesting to the reader their equal claim to regard and that neither was greater than the other. It is naturally the figure of Paul that most requires remodeling. Of his strenuous insistence on the abrogation of the Law there is no intimation other than is contained in the pleasing fiction of the "Council of Jerusalem," where the question of legal obligation is smoothed over and all differences rubbed out. The originality and independence of the great Apostle are conspicuously absent from the account of his missionary labors. The apostleship from revelation, the proclama-

<sup>1</sup> Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, ii, 292.

<sup>2</sup> "The author of Acts never wearies in his attempt to prove that Christians are merely the true people of Israel." Wernle, *op. cit.*, ii, 125.



tion of Christian liberty, the issue with the Twelve, the long conflict with the Judaisers have all disappeared and left no trace. The real Paul is scarcely discoverable in the Catholicised Paul of the author's picture; the revolutionary has been transformed into the conservative. Again and again the Apostle protests that he is a Jew and a Pharisee, that he serves the God of his fathers and has nowise offended against the Law, that he wishes to turn away none from the ancient faith, that he preaches nothing other than the Hope of the Jews; and the misrepresentation culminates in the impossible tale of his "purification" (xxi, 20-26) to acquit himself of the charge of teaching in opposition to the Law. So, too, whenever the controversy over "that way" is brought to the attention of Roman officials it is declared to be a purely Jewish question, and in this it plainly appears that the book of Acts is in effect an apology for Christianity—pointing to a time when the civil authority had assumed a menacing attitude toward the new society—whose object is to claim for it the same freedom and protection which were assured to the Jewish religion in the Roman State, on the ground that Christianity is nothing else than that religion in its true development.

The same idea is the central theme of the gospel of Matthew, the ecclesiastical gospel which supplies a compendium of Christian doctrine and of rules for the Christian life, and whose Catholic temper gained for it the first place in the New Testament Canon.<sup>1</sup> In its view the

<sup>1</sup> "Matthew occupies the standpoint of the Church, the building of which he alone foretells in the triumphant words of xvi, 18. In his eyes the Church forms the highest disciplinary authority, and is the Keeper of all the heavenly means of grace (xviii, 16, 20). Here we find the primitive Catholicism already complete in its essential features, and this gospel has exerted its enormous influence upon Christendom because it was written by a man who bore within him the spirit of the growing Church universal." Jülicher, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 309 and 314.

Law and the Prophets are still authoritative, but in their Christian interpretation, which makes them simply documents prophetic of the life and teaching of Jesus the Messiah. Fulfilment of prophecy certifies the statements of the gospel. In the phrase continually recurring: "this is come to pass that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," the author's special purpose appears of giving to every important event in his narrative the sanction of this fulfilment. And the words of Jesus are to be received not because his sweet reasonableness, his "grace and truth," commend their appeal to the hearts of men, but because inspired writings of the past have foretold his ministry. Again, Jesus, the Jew whose genealogy has been traced to Abraham, is represented as only attacking false interpretations and applications of the Law, and never the Law itself; is even represented as saying (xxiii, 2), "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these observe and do"; or again (v, 17), "Think not I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I come not to destroy but to fulfil. Till heaven and earth pass away one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Papias tells us that everyone translated as best he could the Aramaic Logia-Collection of Matthew, or Levi the Publican, and we may add that everyone edited it to please himself. In the Logia as it came to him the Evangelist found the sayings referred to, and they are plainly insertions by a Jewish-Christian editor who wished to claim the Lord's authority for the tenets of his party.<sup>1</sup> Our author however does not seek to main-

<sup>1</sup> Such is the case with the prohibition to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans in x, 5. The whole chapter is a manual of instruction and exhortation addressed to the missionaries of the Church in the guise of a commission given by Jesus to the Twelve, and in this place, as in the others, the Jewish-Christian sentiment expressed is strikingly at variance with the

tain that the Mosaic Law is binding upon Christians—that issue was dead and buried; it is rather that the Teacher who first showed men the true meaning of the Law points to the general agreement of the old and new dispensations. Yet it was in vain to reject the old Law in the letter while retaining it in spirit, and it is the legal spirit that dominates the religious in this Roman gospel of the third generation. When the task of the Christian missionaries is summarised in the last words of their glorified Lord: “Go ye and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” we see that in the view of the Evangelist it was the mission of Jesus to give mankind commandments. And so in principle the Law was perpetuated in the Church, although it was just the Law in principle which, as Paul and Jesus taught, was to be done away.

The so-called Epistle to the Hebrews<sup>1</sup> follows another line of argument to show that Christianity is the legitimate heir of the Old Testament revelation. It is not concerned with the Law as a code of moral practice, but rather with its ceremonial ordinances, with sacrifice and priesthood. Because these are so significant, so imposing, so divine, in their Christian fulfilment is the final truth

---

context; but inconsistencies of this sort gave little trouble to the writers or readers of those days. For an earlier instance, see how the 19th verse appended to Psalm li clashes with its sentiment and contradicts its statements.

<sup>1</sup> The Epistle is lacking in any form of address to the community to which it was sent, and the superscription, “To the Hebrews,” of which there is no evidence before the end of the second century, rests on the same untrustworthy tradition which assigns the authorship to Paul. There can be little doubt that it was written to the Church in Rome by one of its members—then living, banished or a fugitive, in some place outside Italy—toward the end of the persecution under Domitian, or about 95 A.D.

Von Soden, *The Early Christian Literature*, 248–272. Jülicher, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 148–174.

of religion. It is the writer's earnest endeavor to prove that the ideas of the ancient system are retained by Christianity, only its forms give place to more perfect forms and the type is merged in the antitype. The Epistle agrees with the prophets and psalms that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin; but while they insist on the worthlessness of the sacrificial ritual because their requirement is inward repentance and spiritual renewal, the Epistle urges the inadequacy of the old sacrifices in order to substitute another and a better one. There is no change in principle but only in the nature of the offering. The whole meaning of the Christ's function in relation to God and to man hangs on forms supplied by the old covenant and spiritually reproduced in the new. It follows that Jewish institutions are to be explained, not by the history of the past, but by reference to the future. Our author's eyes are fixed on the scriptural picture of Jewish worship as drawn in the Books of Moses. The Camp, the Sacrifice, the Veil, the Holy of Holies engage his deepest interest, but only in their symbolic interpretation; to him all these things are prophetic types of heavenly realities which Christianity has brought to light, and this thesis is maintained by the method of allegorical exegesis so largely employed by Philo—whom, by the way, the Church Fathers of the fourth century had come to regard as a Christian theologian. Playing fast and loose with the Scripture text was not a monopoly of Alexandria; it was an art cultivated by the Rabbins of Palestine as well, and St. Paul could practice it on occasion, as we have seen; but the Alexandrian method was based on the dualistic scheme of Platonism, and this brought it into sympathetic relation with Greek habits of thought and enabled the Greek mind to assimilate Christianity to itself. Throughout the Epistle the antitheses recur of shadow and reality, created

and uncreated, earthly and divine, transient and enduring; what is needed for the understanding of Scripture is to recognise behind the image, or type, the archetype it represented, and the more artificial and far-fetched the methods of attaining this recognition, the more convincingly they would appeal to those instructed in such methods, the only ones compatible with the nature of the Sacred Writings. For it was not to be supposed that Moses would communicate the divine revelation in the common language of daily life accessible to everyone. The obvious meaning of the sacred text might content dull intellects that could not see beyond appearances, but the enlightened would seek the deeper truth concealed within it; and knowing that the material and concrete are but manifestations, or rather suggestions, of the ideal, they would regard facts and events as in themselves matters of profound indifference and having worth only as symbols of eternal truth. Such a way of dealing with things of the past seems to moderns who have acquired the historical sense but childish jugglery, and the creations of typology a house of cards that will topple over at the touch of reason. Yet the card house has shown itself a durable structure. The typology of this Epistle has engendered a conception of Christianity which makes it the spiritual continuation and fulfilment of the sacerdotal principle of which the old covenant knew only the material forms and the earthly adumbration; the parallelism it would establish between the conditions of Christian salvation and the ritual institutions of Judaism has led Christians of many generations to look for the ancestry of their religion to the Jewish priesthood rather than to the Prophets of Israel. Christ it sets forth as the true High Priest of Christians, who has accomplished the redemptive work which the gifts and sacrifices of his Jewish prototype prefigured, and now he stands within the eternal Taber-



nacle offering his mediational intercession.<sup>1</sup> And so Jesus succeeds to the office and title of his murderer: the Prophet of the human spirit whose message was that free communion with the Father in heaven is the native birthright of every child of man, retracts that message, interposes between earth and heaven to restrict that communion to the channel of his priestly mediation, and returns to the ruling conception, or misconception, of the old religions. "This Epistle," Von Soden remarks, "laid an essential part of the foundation of the Catholic Church of the future. She needed only to substitute for the heavenly High Priest an earthly representative—the Pope—and for his heavenly offering an earthly repetition of the same—the Mass."

In reference to the point under consideration we may note again the exceptional position of the fourth gospel among the books of the New Testament. In the view of its author Judaism and Christianity are sharply contrasted and mutually conflicting religions, and his hostile attitude toward "the Jews" is everywhere apparent. It is significant that on two occasions Jesus is made to say to the Jews: "It is written in your law," and from the few brief allusions to the Old Testament Scriptures it appears that, except as a collection of passages prophetic of the Christian future (v, 39 and 46) they possess no interest for the Evangelist; to his mind the Christian religion is an absolutely new one. We have here one of the many divergences of view in the New Testament, full of instruction for us, which the Church simply ignored when it took the early writings in the lump on the naïve assumption that all inspired Apostles must have taught the same divine truth.

<sup>1</sup> "Unlike St. Paul this writer stands in no personal relation to the person of Christ. He ever continues in the sphere of discussions, analogies, and syllogisms, and we scarcely ever discover in him the heart-throb of simple and direct religious feeling." Von Soden, *op. cit.*, 262.



Here again, as in his covert protest against messianic delusions, the Evangelist found himself powerless to check or change the tendencies of the Christian mind. Whatever he thought, or we may think, Christianity ought to have been, as matter of fact it has been in spirit and principle a perpetuation of Judaism.<sup>1</sup> To what extent this is the case may be seen in the valuable work of Prof. Toy, *Christianity and Judaism*, whose plan is to follow the development of the ideas and beliefs of Judaism from their origin on into the forms they assume in Christianity. For example, the Judaic idea of God was taken over by Christianity. The Jews had emptied the conception of everything concrete and could only say what He is not. He was described entirely by negative predicates—uncreated, imperishable, unchangeable, invisible, incomprehensible; and then angels and demons had to be introduced for a connecting link between this transcendent Deity and the world of men. The Church did not adopt the extreme position of later Judaism, which anticipates Herbert Spencer in pronouncing God absolutely unknowable by human intelligence, but the Deism so long the orthodox theology was practically a close approach to it. The Supreme Being dwelling aloof from men's

<sup>1</sup> "All the ideas of the Old Testament which had led men to Pharisaism were formally adopted. The central idea of Israel's creed, that of salvation by machinery, won a complete triumph over the central idea of Christ's creed, that of salvation by spiritual growth. The false dualism of the Jews, the total separation of heaven from earth, of God from man and nature, became the basis of the philosophy of Christendom. The externalism, the ceremonialism, the literalism, the materialism, the pessimism, the asceticism, the exclusiveness, the uncharitableness of the Jews entered into the life and blood of Christianity. The war that Judaism had waged against freedom—the inward freedom which is the counterpart of spiritual life—was renewed by Christianity and carried on with deeper skill, with ampler resources and on an immeasurably larger scale. The audacious claim of Israel to be God's chosen people was matched and even out-rialed by the claim of the Church to have inherited a complete monopoly of the grace and favor of God." *The Creed of Christ*, 171.

distant adoration in the solitude of His unapproachable majesty returned to dispossess the God revealed by Jesus, and reappears in varying guise in Augustine's foreign despot, Anselm's feudal lord, Calvin's capricious tyrant, and Paley's retired mechanician. The Christian conception of God remained shadowy and vague; the heavenly Father faded into a deified abstraction, at most a *roi fainéant*, and the Christ became the real God of the Christian religion, as he had virtually come to be in the mind of Paul. For whenever God is exalted to a height above the reach of man's communication with Him a mediating power becomes a necessity, and then goes on to fill the whole field of men's religious consciousness.

If the Christians seem to have worshipped two Gods, we must remember that the monotheism they inherited from Judaism was a conception imperfectly realised by the Jewish mind. This appears in the part assigned the heathen gods in the government of the world and the largely independent functions of the guardian angels of the nations. Above all, the vast power attributed to Satan, the leader of the hosts of evil, is inconsistent with the supremacy of the one God.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the vigorous protest against Persian dualism by one of the writers in Deutero-Isaiah, Satan, the Adversary, developed in later Judaism into a figure almost reaching the proportions of the Mazdean Angro Mainyus, and as such he passes into Christianity. Men tremble for body and soul in dread of his manifold malignant activities, and human history is the arena of a conflict between divine and satanic powers. Satan is the prince and god of this world (John xiv, 30; II Cor. iv, 4), all its kingdoms and their glory are in his gift, and his power during the present "age" is represented as co-ordinate with that of God. So it

<sup>1</sup> In the *Wisdom of Solomon* he is identified with the serpent of the Eden myth, and this interpretation was accepted by the Christians.

must have been regarded by Irenæus, Origen, and Augustine when they taught that the Death on the Cross was the ransom due to Satan.

The Christian belief in angels is an adoption of the Jewish, which was itself an importation from Babylonia and Persia. Angels are the ministers of the inactive Jewish God and the channels of all communication between heaven and earth. Jesus has little or nothing to say of these intermediary beings, for the intimate relations of the Father with His human children leave no room for their activities. The Gospel tradition is free from angelology, and it is only in the prologue and epilogue, the stories of the birth and resurrection, that angels appear. The book of Acts gives us several instances of their helpful ministry to saints in distress; the Revelation is populous with angels, and little else than a record of their various performances, and according to Hermas, whose knowledge of the angelic host is amazing, men are given over from one angel to another for their higher education, and have much more to do with them than with God. For the average Christian the religion of Jesus was all but submerged by this increasing flood of Jewish angelology.

So too the ideas of sin and righteousness were moulded by Jewish influence. After the question of the Messiah the question of the Law was the chief point in the controversy with the Jews, and as the grounds of belief in Christ were traced to Jewish antiquity, so the Law was found to be a revelation which only Christians interpreted aright, and according to the apologists' conception they alone truly observed the Law.<sup>1</sup> Hence the declaration

<sup>1</sup> "How often in the history of religion has there been a tendency to do away with some traditional form, but to do so by giving it a new interpretation. The endeavor seems to be succeeding, when of a sudden the old meaning comes back again. There is no tougher or more conservative fabric than a constituted religion; it can only yield to a higher phase by being abolished. No good could be expected from the twisting and turning of

of the first gospel that Christ comes not to destroy but to fulfil the Law, that one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. Christ is the second Moses, and his new law is only the disclosure of the true meaning of the old. The Law had been given in this Christian meaning and the Jews, taking it literally, had misunderstood it. The ceremonial law had only a transient purpose and was no longer obligatory; its real significance lay in "having a shadow of the good things to come." Practically it comes to this, that the Law for Christians is the eternal moral law which according to the Stoics and St. Paul (Romans iii, 14-15) is the law of nature written in the heart. This in general is the thesis enlarged upon by Justin and Irenæus, and while this new legal religion of Christianity is something essentially different from the Gospel of Jesus, it might seem that the evil consequence of such a transformation would be minimised by the purely moral conception of the Law. Unfortunately however along with this liberal construction of the Law the essential notions of Jewish ethics were gaining the tacit acceptance of the Church. The ethical teaching of Christian writers was founded upon that of the Jewish Scriptures and later non-canonical books. The morality inculcated by Hermas is taken almost entirely from the *Testament of the twelve Patriarchs*. The tract called *The Two Ways* is of doubtful origin, and the fact that a Jewish and a Christian authorship can be maintained with equal plausibility for the same writing testifies to the similarity of later Jewish and early Christian ethics. Both of these alike are dominated by the idea of legality. Righteousness consists not in the essence of character, but in the keeping of commandments imposed

---

the Law in the early Church so as to make room for the new faith beside it, or so as to approximate the old religion to that faith." Harnack, *What is Christianity?* 188.

by divine authority and sanctioned by threats and promises, by a system of rewards and punishments; sin is the transgression of a rule, rather than a staining of the soul. Morality attaches to the deed, not the doer; conduct is no longer an organic whole, but is broken up into separate virtues and vices that remain something external to the man himself. Again, when obedience to law is made the standard of moral values the notion of "merit," of works of supererogation deserving a special reward, is a natural consequence; and with this notion the technical term "perfection" passed from Judaism to Christianity. In the gospel of Mark Jesus calls on the rich young ruler to give his possessions to the poor if he would inherit eternal life; but Matthew has it if he would attain to the perfection that goes beyond obedience to the commandments. This Jewish doctrine of merit was embraced with fervor by Catholicism, although Jesus distinctly repudiates it in the parable of the unprofitable servants. On the other hand a religion of law can only enforce an outward show of duty, and when legal duties become an oppressive burden they tempt to a demoralising casuistry prolific in devices to evade unpleasant obligations. The Pharisees were masters of this art and the Jesuits of after days showed themselves apt pupils.

In the Jew's worship of an abstract Law God became a complicated series of commandments, and His service a chaos of obediences. The great transforming power of religion, a generous uplifting of the soul to a devotion of self-forgetting love, was checked and chained to a meticulous observance of petty regulations that took the name of duties to God. It was this religion of slavery to a task-master that Jesus strove to revolutionise. In his lectures entitled "The Influence of Jesus" Phillips Brooks brings out in his own beautiful way how the Sermon on the Mount is dominated by the conception of God as Father.



This, he says, is "the Key which alone can unlock its meaning." And its meaning is that the spring of human righteousness is in a personal relation, a relation of reverence, trust, and love to the heavenly Father.

The inwardness of the Gospel was indeed by no means wholly lost to the life of Christian men, but the Judaic inheritance remained a potent counteracting influence. Very early the Church felt itself called upon to legislate, to supply its members with a code of practical rules. The Deutero-Pauline Epistles give us lists of household commandments laying down the duties of wives, children, and slaves with corresponding directions for fathers, husbands, and masters.<sup>1</sup> In the later Pastorals the household regulations give place to those affecting sex and class. In I Timothy the subjection of woman to man, rather than of wife to husband, is insisted on, and there follow detailed commands for bishops and deacons and a long string of ecclesiastical ordinances. So Titus is a compilation of class commandments with special practical rules applying to all sorts of cases and relationships. The keynote of all is the demand for obedience, and its tendency the formulation of rules to govern the conduct of life. And so the Church, losing faith in the untrammelled conscience, and giving up the appeal to the inward man, by degrees fell back into the fatal externalism of the Jew, and while rejecting his national law substituted for it a legalism of its own, the binding author-

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii, 18, iv, 1; Eph. v, 22-vi, 9. In I Peter, ii, 13-iii, 7, we have a similar table revised in keeping with the circumstances of the time. The duty of the wife in the case of a mixed marriage is pointed out, and a rule laid down concerning simplicity of dress; and since the writer would urge patient endurance under persecution, the first command upon his list is that of obedience to the emperor and to governors. We find (v, 1-5) that the pastoral office has developed in the Church, and the mutual duties of the elders and their flock are prescribed after the manner of the household table.

ity of fixed rule in faith and practice. It is plain from every point of view that "the attempt to crush the new religion into the categories of the old lost the ground that had been won by the destruction of these very categories by the new faith."<sup>1</sup>

If the Christian mind has failed to perceive the essential antagonism between the Gospel principles and those of Judaism, that blindness is the measure of its failure to grasp the meaning of the Gospel. For one thing, it means all that horrified the Pharisees in the conduct and teaching of Jesus. Their inquisitorial agents discovered that he never fasted, that he disregarded the ceremonial ablutions, that he rejected the whole system of sacred taboos, for he told the people that nothing going into a man from without can defile him, but the things that come out of him are those that defile the man. Above all he was a persistent Sabbath breaker, and dared to dethrone the most venerated of Jewish ordinances by the revolutionary declaration that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. In all this controversy with the devotees of the Law and the Tradition Jesus was not merely assailing specific ritual practices, but the principle of ritualism, and in any and every form it was banished from the circle of his disciples. "It is characteristic of the essence of Jesus' view of life that he instituted no act of a ritual nature."<sup>2</sup> On the contrary his mission was to raise religion from the dead, to free it from the cerements of rigid externalism and bring it, a warm and living thing, into the hearts and consciences of men. His Gospel means the infinite love of God the Father, His free pardon and restoration of the repentant sinner; it means the spiritual freedom of man, his native capacity for goodness and for the aspiration to perfection. All then that tends to separate the Father from the child, all sacerdotalism,

<sup>1</sup> Wernle, *op. cit.*, ii, 102.

<sup>2</sup> Holtzmann, *Life of Jesus*, 521.

or barring of their direct communion by so-called mediators, all sacramentalism, or mechanical restrictions on the action of the Divine Spirit within the spirit of man, all materialisation of the spiritual life by the formalism of routine piety—devotional “practices” in place of the love of God and fixed penances in place of the contrite heart: all this ought to be known for what in truth it is, a relapse into the spirit of the old religion from which Jesus strove to deliver his people.

Finally, the Church itself in principle was an inheritance from Judaism. All primitive religion is a tribal relation to the god, and so in Israel it was always the affair of the nation, for Jehovah’s covenant was with His people as a whole. When with the Exile the national existence came to an end, religion was left the sole bond of social unity, and it was a religious community under the government of its High Priest that returned to settle in the Persian province of Judea. Jewish religion was, according to the only known theory of religion, the relation of this community to God, a relation now determined by a codified system of law. The sentiment of individual piety, a growth of the years of exile, was not excluded by this communal constitution of religion, and in the early days it found ardent expression, but the tendency was steadily to repress it, to reduce the individual to a member of the Church, as of old he had been a member of the clan. In the time of Jesus religion meant for the Jew a church with a legal constitution, and to be religious meant to belong to the church. The term Church (Quāhal: in the Septuagint *Εκκλησία*) was used by the Jews to denote the whole body of the people in its relation to God. The Christians, a community called of God and ruled by His Spirit, took over this title as descriptive of themselves, and whatever the novelty of the Christian faith, the Christian Church by the very name appeared to be the

successor of the old theocracy. Moreover, the Jewish Church was the unity of the people of God on earth established as an ecclesiastical institution—a very definite concrete reality; and so the Christians, regarding themselves as the true Israel, the new people of God, were led to feel that their religious society must be constituted on the same ecclesiastical principles. It was not only in the Church of Jerusalem that this idea prevailed. For St. Paul too the Christian Church, as the legitimate heir of the Old Testament promises, was the true church of God, not a modern construction but claiming unbroken descent from antiquity: a position which seems much the same as that of the Anglo-Catholics in relation to Rome.<sup>1</sup>

And so the Church came back with its authority, with its intolerance: the institution “where men would order the attitude of our inmost hearts toward our God.” It is true, the ill effects of an evil principle do not at once disclose themselves. The Jewish Law was in the long run fatal to the true piety that only lives in freedom, yet we learn from the Psalms—the Hymn books of the second Temple—that for generations after its introduction the pious found it no burden but welcomed it with joy. And so in the early Church, where the new enthusiasm held full sway and organisation was loose or lacking, the Christian fellowship was a life of individuals in the equality of a personal inspiration. But ways that are broad and

<sup>1</sup> “St. Paul fought for the universalism of Christianity and the religion of love in place of that of legalism: what he really attained was the establishment of the Christian Church with the new legalism of faith and the creed, with the return of all the Jewish sin of fanatical intolerance, . . . pronouncing as he did that all outside the fold were doomed to perish.” Wernle, *op. cit.*, i, 309 and 339.

The persecution of the Jews in medieval times was in a sense retributive—a case of chickens coming home to roost, for the spirit of intolerance that prompted it was itself a heritage from Judaism. That villany it taught the Christians and they bettered the instruction.

smooth at first may be those that lead to destruction, and of these one ran to Pharasaism and the other to medieval Rome. With the waning of enthusiasm on the one hand and the growing instinct of domination on the other, a more elaborate organisation was framed for the Christian communities and a new Church arose to succeed the elder.<sup>1</sup> It tended to centralise in the capital of the world, as for the Diaspora the Church had centered in the Holy City; and so the Jewish idea in its Christian form entered on a new lease of power to last through many centuries.<sup>2</sup> It was with this idea Jesus took issue when he spoke direct to the individual, to the independent conscience, for "wherever men realise their individuality and individual responsibility, there the authority of the Church ceases" (Wernle). When Jesus wakened the religious consciousness and brought it face to face with God, that was an implicit rejection of the claims of every ecclesiastical organisation. It is common to speak of Jesus as the founder of the Church: there cannot be a completer misconception. Jesus called his disciples the light of the world, the salt of the earth, as he had likened the kingdom to the leaven in the meal and the pungent mustard seed.<sup>3</sup> It would have been in contravention of

<sup>1</sup> "The Christian Church took the place of the Jewish, and its claims are mostly the same: external, ceremonial, legal, and theological. Jesus' words condemn his own church down to the present day." Wernle, *op. cit.*, i, 95.

<sup>2</sup> "After the Christian churches had begun to take the form of a new spiritual empire wide as the Roman empire itself, there grew up a conception that the new Ecclesia Dei whose limits were the world was the exact counterpart, though on a larger scale, of the old Ecclesia Dei whose limits had been Palestine." Hatch, *Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 141.

<sup>3</sup> Holtzmann (p. 255) argues that these parables, like those of the Tares and the Net, are pairs, or parallels, expressing the same thought. If that of the mustard seed is meant to signify the great expansion of the kingdom, a nut or an acorn would have better served for the figure; for in fact the mustard seed does not grow into a very large bush, nor is it the smallest of all seeds.



his principles and aims to form any special organisation of his followers distinct and apart from the world at large. And none of them, he said, was to be called Master or Teacher, for they were all brethren; none was to assume an authority which should trench upon the equality of all. This was to attack the principle of hierarchy, which puts one man's religious life under the tutelage of another, and to vindicate the spiritual independence of all men. In the teaching of Jesus religion is personal or it is nothing; a man's relation to God is not held through the mediation of a religious institution, but in the heart-felt bond of a filial communion. And so what Jesus "founded" was a spiritual fellowship, or rather that arose spontaneously in so far as a new religious consciousness, a new aspiration to the higher life, a new devotion of love to God and man were a common spirit animating all and drawing all together. Such a fellowship differs from a Church as vitality from mechanism. The Church was a product of later times, an organisation built up gradually as ideas of authority and creed and priest and sacrifice took rise and gathered power; and it is evident that from the first the movement to ecclesiasticism was a reactionary movement, and that Catholicism is the Judaising of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "When a spiritual movement begins to materialise into form, credal or institutional, that form is necessarily in the manner of a degradation from the primal spiritual impulse. Institutionalised religion is always a degeneration from spiritual religion. . . . No institution can be perfectly true to its ideal, but it is the peculiar misfortune of the Church that since the sum and substance of Christian practice is proclaimed to be loyalty to the ideal, the mind and spirit of the Master, it has come about that few institutions are so false to their professed ideal as is the Christian Church. If one thing is more obvious than another it is that the Church to-day is precisely that which Jesus opposed in Judaism and died to break through." Edward Lewis, "The Failure of the Church," in the *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1914. Vol. cxiv, No. 6.

## 2. *The Antecedents of the Sacraments*

While the general idea of the Church, as an institution of religion, as a spiritual State, was taken over from Judaism, the realisation of the idea was affected by other influences, and much of the material in the structure of Catholicism was borrowed from other sources—its doctrine from Greek philosophy, its discipline from Roman administration, and its worship from Asiatic rituals.

We find the Pauline communities already in possession of two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and it has been the teaching of the Church for ages that both owe their origin to the ordination of Jesus himself. But it said of him at the outset that he would not baptise with water like John, but with the Holy Spirit, and except in the latest additions to Matthew, the Synoptics breathe no word ascribing to Jesus the institution of the initiatory rite by which converts were received into the Church.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there in Paul's writings any trace of a command by Jesus to baptise, and that nothing was known of such a command in apostolic times may be inferred from I Cor. i, 17. Later on the rite of baptism which had come into use was traced back to an institution by Jesus from the natural inclination to lend the sanction of the Master to the apostolic practice; but it rests on the mistaken assumption that it was his purpose to found a religious community as John had done.

As to the Eucharist, Mark (xiv, 22-24) gives us the account of what took place at the Lord's Supper in its simplest form:

As they were eating he took bread and when he had blessed it he brake it and gave to them and said, Take ye, this

<sup>1</sup> The appearance of the Trinitarian formula in Matthew xxviii, 19, fixes the late date of the passage, all early baptism being, as is well known, "into the name of the Lord Jesus."

is my body. And he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave to them and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant which is (has been) shed for many.

The last words have already an explanatory turn that gives them the look of an addition to the words of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

The text of Matthew (xxvi, 26–28) reproduces that of Mark practically without variation except in the addition “shed for many *for the remission of sins.*” Here is another step in the way of amplification, or rather a turn in a new direction; the blood of a covenant sealed and clinched a treaty, it had nothing to do with an atoning sacrifice. So far there is nothing in the words of Jesus that intimates a purpose to institute a memorial rite which should be continued in perpetuity, and if the Evangelists had found in the sources they drew upon any evidence of such a purpose it is impossible they should have suppressed it. In the third gospel, however there appears an explicit direction given the disciples for the periodic repetition of the action they witnessed. Luke writes (xxii, 19–20):

He took bread and when he had given thanks he brake it and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you.

<sup>1</sup> Such it would seem they must be if he is made to speak in the past tense of a blood shedding still in the future. And so he does speak unless the word *ἐκχυννόμενον* is to have a different meaning here from the meaning it has elsewhere. In Matthew xxiii, 35 we read, “all the righteous blood shed upon the earth” from Abel to Zachariah—that means the blood which has been shed; and in Luke xi, 50, the same Greek participle is so rendered: “the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world.”

This passage is borrowed from a writing earlier than any one of our gospels, St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. We read (xi, 23-25):

The Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he brake it and said, This is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do as often as ye drink in remembrance of me.

It will be seen that the Evangelist follows the Apostle with substantial exactness, except that he gives only once, in reference to the distribution of the bread, the injunction, "this do," and in place of the repetition of it adopts, with a single change, the closing words of Mark.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The question arises whether the Evangelist himself interpolated into his narrative these sayings derived from I Cor., thus displacing another form of the tradition, or whether the interpolation is due to a later hand, the original Lucan narrative having in that case closed with 'This is my body.' In favor of the latter is the fact that verses 19b and 20 are wanting in important Western MSS., and the omission of these important words is as difficult to explain as the insertion of them is easy to account for. The omission of the distribution of the symbolic cup was unwelcome, and it was therefore added to the Lucan account—which originally contained only one giving of the cup, without any reference to the ritual of the Supper (v. 17)—in the form of a second giving of the cup (v. 20) by means of an interpolation derived from I Cor. Cf. Westcott and Hort, *Select Readings*, 64: 'These difficulties leave no moral doubt that the words in question were absent from the original text of Luke.'

"I hold that we have in this shorter Lucan text, as preserved by Codex D, the oldest account of the Last Supper. . . . There follows the further consequence that the words in Mark, also, who is followed by Matthew, 'This is my blood which is shed for many,' do not belong to the oldest tradition, but are an addition derived by Mark from the Pauline theology. . . . In I Cor. xi, 24f, Paul has given to the celebration of the Lord's Supper the character of a mystical commemoration of the death of Christ. This *new* conception of it found its way through Mark, the disciple of Paul, into the Evangelical tradition, and has carried with it the alteration of the original version which is still preserved in the shorter text of Luke. This did not however everywhere displace the older form of the Holy Communion.

What then was the source of St. Paul's information on the subject? He tells us in the words introducing his statement: "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus," etc. This appeal to a personal revelation can scarcely be allowed the value of historic evidence—though to Paul it seemed of greater value. Always when he would insist on the originality of his gospel and emphasise his entire independence of any human medium, he speaks of receiving knowledge direct from God or Christ. It must be confessed that as a safe foundation for statements of fact a miraculous communication from the spirit world leaves something to be desired. No one would dream of impugning the Apostle's perfect sincerity, yet it might not be difficult, we may suppose, for him to persuade himself that the fundamental truth of religion must have been taught by Jesus emblematically in that breaking of the bread on the eve of his departure from the world to which the tradition testified; and this conviction may have brought to him the vision that confirmed it.<sup>1</sup> Now what we find in all the gospel narratives of the Last Supper, appearing with a growing emphasis, is a reference to the death of Jesus viewed as an atoning sacrifice, and as a means to the making of a new covenant to supersede the covenant made at Sinai, when Moses sprinkled the people with the blood of the sacrifice. These are distinctively Pauline

---

ion, for that this long maintained itself in wide circles of the Church is proved by the Communion prayers in the *Didache* which have no reference either to the gospel text or to Paul." *Primitive Christianity*, ii, 178-179, 491-493.

<sup>1</sup> "It was quite in the manner of the great Apostle to regard the outcome of his own matured reflections as a revelation from the Lord. That he should have seen in the rite a confirmation of the dogma, that he should have cast the tradition into a form in harmony with it, and also that his version of the incident should have been incorporated in the evangelical tradition, was only what we might expect." Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 65.



ideas, they are cardinal dogmas of the Pauline theology, and they are ideas utterly foreign to the mind of Jesus who taught the free unconditional forgiveness of the repentant sinner, and the natural relation of men to God, that of children to a Father, and not a relation founded in any covenant, contract, or bargain. It is impossible to believe that Jesus ever spoke words in countenance of doctrines that contravene the essential principles of his Gospel; nor can we admit the possibility that he who saw so clearly to what condition externalism had brought religion could have instituted a ritual ordinance as a last bequest to his disciples.<sup>1</sup> That the sacramental idea is something alien to his principles, purposes, and methods, runs counter to

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the rites and ceremonies of religion owe their origin to a spirit of devotion which seeks in them an expression for itself, yet all sacramentalism holds a danger for us that we have need to guard against. If the sacrament be regarded as pre-eminently the medium of communion with the Divine, if our communion at its deepest and closest tends to be restricted to the sacrament, then it will be rather harmful than helpful in its effect upon the religious life. For the aim of the religious life is to come into close and living union with God, to feel His presence with us, to abide in Him as He in us. Religion is the bond (*religio*) of this fellowship, this intimate communion, which is theoretically the end of all religious practices, sacraments, and rites. But God is a spirit: the religious relation is wholly spiritual. The sacrament is a materialisation of it, and that is unsafe. To maintain a real communion with God, to keep our spirit the temple of His indwelling, takes effort, a tension of heart and will. To partake of the Bread and Wine is easy, and we are all prone to take the easiest way; and so the danger is that this which is intended for an aid to communion in the spirit may become a mechanical substitute for that, and the reverent communicant leave the chancel rail satisfied that there is no more for him to do. And even though he escape the utter formalism of a Christian Pharisee, his sacramentalism leads him to feel that it is not in every hour of life, but only at the altar he comes into the "real presence" of his God. Yet our communion with wife or child knows no need of any mediation, is not conditioned by any stated rite: it is a heart-union, constant, incessant as the heartbeats. Why should our communion with God be other than this, be less than this? What communion with the heavenly Father was ever so close, so intimate as that of Jesus, and is there not something grotesque in the thought of it as sacramentally conditioned?

his religion of the spirit, or at least falls below its level, is evident to conservative scholars of impartial mind. Even Holtzmann, who accepts Paul's as the best version of Jesus' language—taking "I received of the Lord" to mean I received from Peter—nevertheless insists on the implication of the words "this do every time you drink." He writes:

Hence it is apparent that Jesus did not intend this observance to be a ceremonial of worship in the Christian community, but as a domestic celebration at the regular meal. Even in this act he did not wish to give to his followers any institution of a liturgical character.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, it has been questioned whether in fact Jesus offered the wine to his disciples. Pfleiderer considers that since it is only in relating the distribution of the bread the synoptics are in accord, this is to be regarded as the historical kernel of the story (see also Luke xxiv, 30-31, 35, and Acts ii, 42) and he points out that in the love feasts of the Christians it is only the breaking of the bread that is spoken of, the cup and its symbolism do not appear; moreover these gatherings were in their intent a cheerful celebration of brotherly unity, not a solemn commemoration of Jesus' death.<sup>2</sup> How then are we to understand the action and the words of Jesus in the break-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jesus*, 464. See Keim to the same effect, *Jesus of Nazara*, v, 333-335.

<sup>2</sup> So Rogers, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus*, 321: "The institution [*i.e.* the Eucharist] when first it meets us is by no means what we should expect a memorial rite to be. The very name by which the meeting went at which it is supposed that it was celebrated—and which from Paul's account would seem to be identical with it—the *Agape*, points to a different origin. It seems to have been a social gathering of the Church, and this characteristic hardly could have assumed the prominence it did, so as to supply the name, if the rite had been instituted by Jesus himself for another purpose.

ing of the bread? What he really had in mind I think may be inferred with a fair degree of probability by any one who has followed carefully the story of his life. When Jesus sat down to the Last Supper with his disciples on the fatal Thursday night that put an end to their earthly companionship, he was well aware of his desperate situation. For some days he had held his enemies at bay while the people, excited by the appearance of a new prophet, thronged eager and curious about him. But their support failed him. They found his message vague and disappointing, their interest cooled, and soon they stood aloof, alienated and sullen. Jesus saw himself trapped in this Jerusalem that killed the prophets and stoned the messengers of God. For him the end had come; to the friends he left behind him he must commit his cause. The sacrifice of his life he was prepared to make, but his cause—the spiritual kingdom of God, the reformation of religion—that must not be abandoned. Experience had taught him that the Gospel gained its strongest hold upon the hearts of those in closest communication with himself. Now that he was to be taken away he felt more than ever how much the success of his work depended upon the attachment to his person of those who should carry on that work. He must not be forgotten; he must live in their hearts. His last hope was that death should not break the union of his followers with his spirit, the spirit of his devotion to the cause that claimed his life. As, possessed with these thoughts, he blessed and broke the loaf set before him there flashed upon him one of those analogies which appealed so constantly to his vivid imagination, and giving into his friends' hands the broken bread, "This," he cried, "is my body." It was an acted parable which he confided to the intelligence of love, and its simple meaning was that in partaking of this symbol of his body, of his life, the disciples united themselves with him and with

one another to form one body, one organic whole. The words of Jesus have no relation to his death: they point to a covenant of loyalty entered into by eating together of the consecrated food, according to the old familiar idea of a sacred social communion which underlay all religious feasts. Even to one who would double the Prophet with the Priest, if his sympathy makes real to him the tragic scene of the Last Supper—shadowed by treachery, heavy with suspense, the heart of Jesus throbbing with anxieties and longings—it must seem incredible that any thought of formally instituting a sacramental rite could *then* have crossed his mind; and the Heidelberg Professor, who would make of Jesus an ecclesiastic and a theologian, wholly concerned at such an hour as this with the foundation of Christian doctrine and practice, must seem to him of all men absorbed in special studies the blindest to anything beyond them.<sup>1</sup>

That some stated observance in commemoration of Jesus and especially of his death should have taken rise among the Christian believers, that it should have grown and taken form from this memorable scene, and that the belief should become generally accepted that Jesus himself must have given directions to such effect—all this is only natural and seems to be the truth of the matter. The Apostle Paul found it easy to make a rite out of this incident of the disciples' last hour with the loved Master and to expand his simple words into a ritual formula. At first the blessing and breaking of the bread, and its distribution together with the wine, were no more than a ceremony of consecration attached to the common evening meal, the Agape. But the development was rapid; before the middle of the second century the sacrament of the Eucharist appears, separated from the Agape, transferred from the evening to the morning, united with

<sup>1</sup> Schenkel, *The Character of Jesus*, ii, 230-244.

the worship of God, and with the Bishop its only lawful celebrant; and already in the language of Ignatius and of Justin we find the germs of the coming miracle of the Mass.

There remains a point that claims attention though it has no great importance for the present discussion. Whether the Last Supper was in fact a celebration of the Passover, as the Synoptics have it, is a vexed question, and the weight of argument appears to support the negative. Mark, after recounting the events of Wednesday, tells us (xiv, 1), "After two days was the feast of the Passover." According to this the Passover began on Friday night, and this is the date generally accepted by scholars. But it is also the generally accepted view, and seemingly the assured fact, that Friday was the day of Jesus' crucifixion. This however proves to be an error if the Last Supper was a Passover Supper. In that case Jesus must have been crucified on Saturday; but this can hardly be maintained, for Saturday was the Sabbath, and this Sabbath the great day of the Passover when the activities of the priests and people and labor in the fields and the selling of goods (Mark xv, 21 and 46) would have been impossible. Besides this, the question of date seems to be decided by Mark's words referring to the day of the crucifixion: "When even was come, because it was the Preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath," etc. (Mark xv, 42). If then we hold that the crucifixion was on Friday it follows that the Last Supper took place on Thursday, the night before the Passover; and its transference to the following night by the Synoptics is due apparently to the later doctrine that the death of Jesus was the sacrifice typified by that of the paschal lamb. The fourth Evangelist, who took no interest in the Pauline dogmas, went back to the original tradition, which we have found in Mark (the passage last cited), that Friday was the day



of the crucifixion, and consequently that the farewell supper of Jesus with the disciples was held on Thursday night, and was not the Passover Supper. It was doubtless Jesus' intention to keep the Passover, and we are told of arrangements he made to that end, but probably because rumors reached him on Thursday of the plot against him and the treason of one of his own followers, he found it necessary to advance the last meeting with his friends to that same evening, giving them time to find their way back to Galilee in safety.

Schmidt holds that the saying, This is my body, being suggested by the analogy of the paschal meal, must be given up because Jesus "was put to death before the time had come for eating the Passover." But if the saying had no reference to his sacrificial death, the fact of its utterance before the Passover does not render it improbable.

When we consider the deep impression which the doctrine of justification by faith has made upon Christian thought since Reformation times, and how it has been looked upon as holding the central place in the Pauline theology, and not rather as occasioned by the demands of the anti-Judaic polemic, it may be something unexpected to find St. Paul the creator of the Christian sacraments and insisting upon their supreme importance as means of salvation. And yet his conception of a sacrament as far more than a symbolic rite and having in itself a supernatural efficacy, intrinsically operative without regard to the sentiments of the recipient, is logically consequential upon his doctrine of the flesh and sin and moral impotence and the necessity of being saved by some agency external to oneself.<sup>1</sup> According to Paul baptism is in effect a mystical participation in the death of Christ through the

<sup>1</sup> "It is a very significant fact that Paul approves the custom of baptising living Christians for the dead, in order to extend to them after death the blessing of baptism and to ensure their resurrection." Wrede, *Paul*, 120.

submersion and emergence from the water, symbolical of burial and resurrection. He that is washed in baptism is sanctified and justified in the name of Christ by the Spirit of God (I Cor. vi, 11). "Baptism it is that, in conjunction with belief, actually bestows redemption on the individual" (Wrede, *Paul*, 122). It is a miracle and a mystery. In this sacramental dying with the Christ, the old man is put off, the body of sin is slain, the believer shares in all that was achieved upon the cross or at the sepulchre and becomes an heir of the glory which the Day of the Lord shall reveal.

And now the life issuing from this new birth needs to be divinely nourished and sustained by the body and blood of Christ received in the Lord's Supper. The sacrament is not only a memorial by which Christians "do show the Lord's death till he come," it is the means by which believers maintain that bond of communion with the dead and risen Lord which is the ground of salvation. St. Paul writes:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a communion of the body of Christ? Seeing that there is one bread we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they which eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? What say I then? that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons.<sup>1</sup>

These words are highly significant. The sacred meal in the Pauline churches is the Christian counterpart of the

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. x, 16-21.

sacrifices offered to the gods of the heathens. Just as the heathen through partaking of the sacrifice come into mystic communion with the spirits whom their rites invoke, so through partaking of their own consecrated bread and wine Christians attain communion with the Lord. The parallel is seen to be exact in the Apostle's insistence that the one communion excludes the other. And the sacrament has the sanction of an awful power. They who partake unworthily are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. If they fail to "discern" the Lord's body—to appreciate the sacramental significance of the bread and wine—they eat and drink judgment upon themselves. "For this cause," writes the Apostle, "many among you are weak and sickly and many sleep." In all this Paul is aiming at the education of his heathen converts, yet he appears to sink to their level rather than raise them to a higher. Elsewhere in this Letter Paul calls the Christian community the body of Christ, in that all the brethren are members of a single organism animated by his spirit, and all suffer or rejoice together in the joy or suffering of each one. We find however in the passage cited above that Christian fellowship is made to depend upon sacramentalism: "seeing that there is one bread (or loaf) we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." Of this it has been said:

Paul's conception of the Christian organism is a fine one, worthy of any philosopher; the greater the pity that he cannot sustain himself at this level, but deems it necessary to buttress up the noble spiritual unity he dreams of with a means suggested by and imitated from the pagan and Jewish religions of sacrifice—to wit the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. From the heights of idealism we suddenly drop into the depths of primitive magic and fetichism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. C. Conybeare, *Myth, Magic, and Morals*, 255.

We shall come presently to the grounds for this last statement.

We have seen how the fourth Evangelist ignores and tacitly rejects, so far as he can, the messianic belief in the Parousia and the Judgment, since to his mind the relations of the soul to the Divine are not future events which can be pictured to the eye of fancy as scenes of a drama. In like manner sacramentalism is repugnant to his religious thought inasmuch as it externalises and materialises the inward experiences of the spirit.<sup>1</sup> But here again the Alexandrine idealist is hampered in setting forth his higher teaching by the faith and practice of the Church, and his inconsistencies of expression are imposed upon him by the Christian tradition which cannot be dispossessed of its hold upon men's minds. Thus his doctrine of the new birth encounters the existing rite of baptism, and he is obliged to make Jesus say that a man must be born of water and the spirit (iii, 5) although a little before we have had John declaring that the baptism of the spirit is to supersede the baptism of water. At the same time the following verses (6-8) show that the Evangelist will not tie the action of the Spirit to the baptismal rite. In the same way the Evangelist finds difficulty with the

<sup>1</sup> Some who reject the deity of Jesus can see nothing else in the fourth gospel than the assertion of this repugnant doctrine, but the following tribute of a Unitarian shows a truer appreciation of its author: "The spiritual freedom and insight of the great Evangelist stand out in startling relief against the background of the crystallising traditions and fixed institutions of the Church in the fourth decade of the second century. Had the church possessed a tithe of the spirit of him who substituted a foot washing for the Eucharist, suppressed the baptism of Jesus, refused to be bound by gospel books and ecclesiastical tradition, found life and redemption in the essence and trend of Jesus' teachings and not in forensic fictions, understood that 'the letter killeth' and let his present ideal speak in ways that seemed to him true,—stagnation of doctrinal development, a rigid fixity of institutional character, and a deadening imposition of external authority on the consciences of men would have been impossible." Schmidt, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, 216-217.

Eucharist. It was the accepted belief that the bread and wine of the sacrament had in themselves power to invigorate the spiritual life, that in the physical act of partaking of these holy mysteries was the communication of divine grace. Our author could only do his best to minimise the incongruity of such an idea with his own system of thought, naturally with little success. His sixth chapter opens with the miracle of the loaves and fishes, which, like every other in this gospel, is a "sign," or symbolic act, whose profound signification Jesus reveals in the long discourse that follows. Its text is obligingly furnished by the people: "What sign showest thou that we may see and believe thee? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread to eat." This although they had followed Jesus "because they saw his miracles" (2) and had been so greatly stirred by the astonishing feat of the day before (15). In Matthew and Mark the same demand follows the same miracle; it seems strange that the people should make at once so much and so little of this wonder-working. Jesus replies to the people that he himself is the true bread that cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. "I am the bread of life," are his words, emphasised by reiteration. The fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they died; if a man eat of the living bread that has come down from heaven he shall live forever. It is an essential point of the Evangelist's theology that the divine Logos is the life of humanity. Jesus is not a Jewish Messiah, nor a prophet sent to proclaim spiritual truth and call men to the higher life; he is, in his own being, the Truth and the Life. The bread he gives, of which he that eats shall never hunger more, is not his word, it is himself, for he himself is the Word. These figurative conceptions are to be found in the writings of Philo; there too we may read that the manna is the symbol of the



Logos, for he is the bread of God which nourishes the soul with good thoughts, words, and deeds. Salvation then is gained by assimilation of the Divine Life, and the first condition is to have faith in Him, the incarnate Logos (29). To those who come to him and believe in him (35) Jesus will give himself—that is, his spirit. For all this is Alexandrinism; all is to be taken in a spiritual sense. Here however the attempt must be made to harmonise the Philonic doctrine with the established institution of sacramental communion with the Christ. And so John goes on: “the bread that I give is my flesh for the life of the world. Verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” The people who take these words literally can make no sense of them, and even the disciples murmur: this is a dark saying, who can understand him? The evangelist would intimate how remote from his point of view is any thought of receiving spiritual nourishment from material food, and Jesus replies: “Do you stumble at this? it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.” The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper held too high a place in the Christian cult for one who wrote of Jesus’ ministry to pass it by in silence; it only remained to attach it as firmly as possible to the Alexandrine conception of the Logos as the nourishment of the souls of the faithful. In this intimate connection, which gives the sacrament a symbolic or representative character, is the ground of its observance—not in the occurrences of the Last Supper, all mention of which is missing from the fourth gospel. Its place is taken by the “sign” of the multiplication of the loaves and the discourse on the bread of life, and that the Evangelist would transfer the origin of the sacrament to this occasion is seen in what he borrows from the synoptic narrative: in the interjected statement that the

Passover was at hand (4), in the emphatic introduction of the Eucharist phrase at the breaking of the bread (11), and in the designation of Judas as the traitor (71).

In truth however idealism has no affinity with materialism, and the endeavor to merge or combine the ideas of the fourth gospel with the current sacramentalism could only issue in incoherence and confusion.

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; for my flesh is true meat and my blood is true drink. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me he also shall live by me.

These words, we are told, are to be spiritually understood: the flesh profiteth nothing. The true nourishment of the spiritual life can only be assimilated by the spirit. The source of that life is in God; the Logos has life from the Father and he communicates his life to all who abide in him. But how does eating his flesh and drinking his blood bring men to this abiding in him? What place and what part have this flesh and blood in the gift of eternal life? These are terms of mere metaphor, or else they stand for an order of ideas hopelessly irreconcilable with those which the fourth gospel was written to set forth.

At this time the doctrine of the sacraments destined to hold sway in Christendom was already taking shape, and it might be seen that the effort of the fourth gospel to transform and spiritualise it had little chance of receiving serious consideration. The development of that doctrine was conditioned by the environment. Christianity planted itself in the Greco-Roman world by means of adopting the religious ideas and usages common to many peoples which ran back to an origin in primitive animism; and it could not have gained acceptance without doing

so. It is one of the debts we owe to Edward Freeman that he strove to impress upon his generation a sense of the continuity of history, to show how arbitrary and how misleading are the terms "ancient" and "modern" as applied to it, and the breaking up of man's biography into separate periods bounded by salient events, such as the birth of Jesus, or the abdication of Romulus Augustulus, or the taking of Constantinople by Mahomet II. It is at least equally important for us to recognise that the chasm which seems to yawn between what we call historic and prehistoric time has no real existence, that from the beginning the ages run on one into another and the current of man's life keeps one unbroken flow. Their failure to realise this truth and to acquaint themselves with the constitutive ideas of primitive society is the weakness of such great historians as Grote and Mommsen, and leads them to erroneous views of historic institutions. Thus they represent the Greek and Roman gentes as composed of families, and the family as the basis or unit of the social system. That unit however is the gens, or clan, which is long anterior to the family in its earliest form, and so far from being founded upon the family excludes it from itself. For exogamy, or marriage without the clan, is essential to its constitution, and hence husband and wife must belong to different clans.<sup>1</sup> While of value in every field of historic research, and in many of supreme importance, the study of prehistoric life is indispensable to one who would know something of religion, for here are the roots of all after growth.<sup>2</sup> They

<sup>1</sup> The whole subject of clan organisation and the development of the family is treated with profound research in Lewis Morgan's *Ancient Society*.

<sup>2</sup> "No one can pretend to a knowledge of the great historic religions of the world who has not traced their outlines back to the humble faiths of early tribes from which they emerged." Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, 10.

who inquire into the "origin" of religion will learn that its origin is in the heart of man and, potentially, it comes with man into the world. A rapid glance at the conditions under which it first appears may be worth our while.

The sacramental idea of communion with the Divine through a material rite derives from the beliefs of primitive men embodied in the practice of sacrifice—the worship of the nomad totem clan formed from kinship in the maternal line. Than this no earlier form of social organisation can be discovered; whatever any precedent condition may have been—such as the horde, sexually promiscuous, like the hordes of other gregarious animals—it is not distinctly traceable, nor does it afford any indication of religion. To learn the original meaning of sacrifice we have to divest ourselves of all the acquired knowledge of the ages and try to enter into the mental workings of the children of our race, when the world lay before their eyes undefined and shadowy, a manifold blur of indeterminate existences and happenings where anything was possible. Where there is no knowledge of essential relations, or natural laws, things behave as though they had no law and one does not know what they will do next. Experience consists of a stream of events that just occur, disjointedly, like the incidents of a dream, and it follows that the dreams of primitive men were no less real to them than the life of their waking hours. For they had learned nothing of the distinctions that give definiteness and system to our world. All things were confused together; there was no division between organic and inorganic, between life and consciousness; river, rock, and tree were of one kind and there was no difference between man and beast. Said Turgot: "Man gazes upon the deep ocean of being, but what he sees is the reflection of his own face"; it was true at least of the first men who shaped all outward things in the likeness of themselves,

and saw everywhere about them the operation of personal life and will. Life was the conception that dominated all the workings of the mind. Nothing was inanimate. We can understand how motion might seem a sign of life, and the running stream or the leaping flame be taken for living things, but motionless objects were equally alive, and when one fell and bruised himself upon a rock it was the rock that struck the blow. Again, since the changes man originates in his environment are due to the action of his will, so all other changes that came within his observation primitive man ascribed to the like cause; every object that in any way affected him he endowed with a life and will like his own. In such a world man could not but feel his helplessness. He was surrounded by a multitude of beings of like nature with himself and having unknown power over him for good or ill. His physical helplessness had spurred his intellectual development, and his intellectual helplessness, in view of the dark and perilous uncertainties of his situation, led him into the way of religion, through the feeling that it was possible and necessary to establish permanent friendly relations with some of these higher powers.

His first attempts were governed and guided by two ruling ideas. First, if all things in his world had life, some had it more abundantly; man found the animal of all living things the one that came nearest to himself, and how near it is hard for us to conceive. If even today it be true that "measured by psychic standards the interval between the lowest man and the highest is a hundred fold greater than that between the lowest man and the highest brute"<sup>1</sup> this second interval was far less in prehistoric time. In that far-off day man was nearer to his animal origin by many thousands of years, and nearer to the animal nature by the lack of all those distinctively human char-

<sup>1</sup> S. D. McConnell, *Christianity: An Interpretation*, 112.



acteristics which during those ages have been evolved. Hence came his feeling of close affinity with his fellow creatures which is shown by its survival in the Centaurs of the Greeks or in the amours of Pasiphaë, while the wisdom of Cheiron, the ingenious Puss in Boots—a folk-tale of every language,—the wide-spread Beast-Fable, and the famous epic of Reynard the Fox witness to a time when human traits and human intelligence were quite literally attributed to animals. Then too, souls being one in kind, nothing was easier than their transmigration. It was undoubtedly true that “the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird,” or any creature one met with be a friend of former days. And such transmigration might take place in life as well as after death; at any time a man’s soul might go out of his body and enter that of an animal. To this belief we trace the disguises of Zeus with Leda and Europa, the Swan Maidens and Frog Princes of German Märchen, and the competitive metamorphoses of the Magician and the Princess in the Arabian tale, and from this descend the long-lived superstitions of the Man-tiger and the Were-wolf.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, this common nature of men and animals held a further consequence. Men were grouped in clans, unions of kindred, of sharers in a common blood. Within the clan alone its members found friendship and protection, and the stranger was normally an enemy. If then you would form any friendly relation with a man not by birth your kinsman, he must first become one. You two are not of the same blood, but your blood can be made to intermingle as it flows from your opened veins, and this

<sup>1</sup> As late as 1862 Mr. Baring-Gould found it impossible to procure a guide across a wild tract of country in France which was haunted by a *loup-garou* (Tylor: *Primitive Culture*, i, 314). About the same time there was living in Kirchhain, Germany, a woman who was known to have changed herself into a wolf and scratched and torn a girl going through the fields (Jevons: *Introduction to the History of Religion*, 16).

blood-covenant is a sacred bond of brotherhood, not only between you two, but extending to your clans; your brother is the brother of all your brethren, the blood of either party to this transaction is the blood of all his kin. It was inevitable that man, who imagined that all things felt and acted like himself, should imagine that other beings were organised in societies on the plan of that into which he himself was born; and the resemblance was obvious between the various species of animals and plants and the kins or clans of human society. It followed naturally that a clan might seek to form alliance with one of these animal kinds on the same principle as with a human kin. In his struggle for existence man had learned his inferiority to certain animals in one or another respect, and some had impressed him with a sense of their strange power. "Omne ignotum pro mirifico": their nature being imperfectly known, animals were supposed to possess sundry marvellous attributes, and their counsel and guidance were sought in important affairs, for to the primitive mind "omens are not blind tokens: the animals know what they tell to men."<sup>1</sup> Naturally in their choice of an ally the clan would look for the kind which their imagination most readily gifted with superhuman powers, and so an animal species having a natural affinity with men, yet conceived as superhuman—this became the Totem, or rather that divine kinsman was the soul incarnate in the species. As far back as we can trace the clan this alliance is found existing; the men are of one blood with the animal species, individuals of the species are their fellow clansmen and they are members of the animal clan. Later on the origin of the blood-relationship is lost sight of and it is explained by a myth telling how both kins are descended from a common ancestor, and this ancestor is universally believed to have been animal, not human. By kinship, then,

<sup>1</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 443.

whether natural or artificial, the clan is related to the divine, and hence its members are united not only by blood but by religion; and the earliest form of society is a religious community. The god of the religion is a kindred and friendly power under whose protection men breathe more freely, shielded against assault from the vague unknown; so far from true is it that religion is the child of terror. "It is not with the fear of unknown powers, but with a loving reverence for known gods who are knit to their worshippers by strong bonds of kinship that religion in the true sense of the word begins."<sup>1</sup> This elementary religion was the feeling of a living relation with the divine helper and defender of the clan who claimed its affectionate loyalty, and hence it is that sacrifice, the worship of this religion, is not in its original intention the offering of a gift, nor the paying of a tribute, nor an act of abnegation, nor an effort at propitiation; it is a means of communion with the god. Its purpose was to refresh and renew the life-bond between the clansmen and their god which, as physically constituted, tended to weaken under lapse of time.<sup>2</sup> The procedure to be adopted was obvious to primitive men: a totem animal must be killed and eaten. As the clan is a physical unity, one flesh and one blood, so the flesh and blood of every totem animal is that of the species. And since this is the seat of the life or soul, in the flesh, and especially in the blood, of the divine and kindred animal the god, as the soul of the species, resides. That is to say, it is as god, not as animal,

<sup>1</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *op. cit.*, 54.

<sup>2</sup> The above holds of the stated annual sacrifice; special exigencies called for special sacrifices, when for instance pestilence which betokened the presence of evil spirits, or war which involved encounter with a hostile god as well as with a human foe, impelled the clan to summon its supernatural ally to its need. Among many savages war is still regarded as a quasi-religious function for which preparation must be made by fasting and purification and other rites and ceremonies.

that the totem furnishes the sacramental meal, and hence in partaking of it the worshippers are partakers of the divine life and their union with the god is cemented and confirmed. The most primitive form of sacrifice appears to have survived in the practice of the Arabs of the Sinaitic desert as described by Nilus toward the close of the fourth century. Robertson Smith gives an account of it in these words:

The camel chosen as the victim is bound upon a rude altar of stones piled together, and when the leader of the band has thrice led the worshippers round the altar in solemn procession accompanied with chants, he inflicts the first wound while the last words of the hymn are still upon the lips of the congregation, and in all haste drinks of the blood that gushes forth. Forthwith the whole company fall on the victim with their swords, hacking off pieces of the quivering flesh and devouring them raw with such wild haste that in the short interval between the rise of the day star which marked the hour for the service to begin and the disappearance of its rays before the rising sun, the entire camel, body and bones, skin, blood, and entrails, is wholly devoured.

According to Dr. Bastian (*Der Mensch*, iii, 154) the ancient Prussians retained the essential features of the primitive rite, though without its more revolting details, and the wild rush to cut gobbets of flesh from the living victim had given way to an orderly apportionment of the sacrificial meal among the worshippers. The essential features in question are, first, an altar, a heap of stones, the original purpose of which was simply to receive the blood of the victim, which must not be spilled upon the ground, for that was in the highest degree taboo.<sup>1</sup> Next,

<sup>1</sup> Nilus tells us that only the sacrificers drank of the blood, which was deemed of too high a sanctity to be given to the congregation—a view which seems to have been adopted by the Catholic Church in later days.

the victim must be wholly consumed on the spot where the sacrifice takes place, and all present—in primitive usage the whole clan—must be partakers of the sacrificial meal. Finally, they must prepare for it by fasting, for ordinary food is forbidden to those about to participate of the sacred flesh, and for further precaution against the “uncleanness” which one might inadvertently acquire in the chance happenings of the day, the sacrifice must be at night, or early morning, and all be over before the rising of the sun. It appears then that in its primitive conception sacrifice is the eating of the god, and by this men entered into union with the divine being who swayed the fates and fortunes of the clan. At first it was required under heavy penalty that the totem animal be devoured in its entirety. When under advancing refinement the practice of consuming the bones, skin, and entrails was discarded, these remnants of the meal were disposed of among some tribes by burial, but more commonly by burning—whence, says Dr. Jevons, our word “bon-fire,” from bone-fire—and such destruction was considered an equivalent for the earlier practice, which was based on the idea that it was sacrilege to leave anything of the sacred victim unconsumed.

In its long development through changing time sacrifice took on new meanings and came to express a succession of ideas other than that in which it took its rise. Thus the eating *of* the god passed into eating *with* the god. Since eating sustains life, all eating together of a common food is in primitive thought a bond to unite the lives of men, a symbol and confirmation of fellowship and mutual social obligation.<sup>1</sup> And so the kinsmen and their kindred

<sup>1</sup> For the bond of salt, or milk, the law of hospitality, etc., and the ideas underlying them, see Robertson Smith, *op. cit.*, 269 *sq.* In the days of the clan men would not eat together at all unless they were united by kinship, or by a covenant which had the same effect as kinship. This idea appears



god became commensals, and communion between them was maintained by their joint participation in the flesh and blood of the sacrifice, the latter being the portion of the god (Ps. 1, 13). Later on, when the idea of property has taken rise, sacrifice becomes an offering *to* the god. In agricultural times the deity is conceived as king of his people and lord of the land which he makes to yield the crops, and as such he is to be approached with gifts or tribute of cereals, fruits, and cattle. Still later the growth of ethical consciousness leads to the notion of sacrifice as an atoning offering for sin, or in time of calamity a propitiation to avert the wrath of the offended god. Throughout all changes, however, and overlaid though it came to be by other associations, the original idea of sacrifice as a means of communion with a divine life held a persistent predominance in the minds of men. That among the Hebrews the flesh of the sin-offering was eaten by the priests in the holy place witnesses to the retention of the old principle of sacrificial communion, only the communion is restricted to the priests as representatives of the sinful people. In fact all atoning sacrifice rests on the idea of communion, for it is simply an act to retie the bond of union with the alienated god and wipe out the memory of estrangement.

The transition from totemism to a worship of anthropomorphic divinities is most clearly traceable in Egypt. It begins in the selection of one individual of the animal species as the one the deity has chosen to abide in; as, for instance, the calf marked by the peculiar signs which showed it to be the manifestation of the Calf-god, Apis.

---

in Genesis xliii, 32, and its survival in New Testament times. "He eateth with sinners" was the grave charge against Jesus, and Peter at Antioch was constrained to give up eating with the Gentiles. Today in Russia a man's life is sacred, though he be an enemy or a criminal, if he has partaken of your bread and salt. Cf. H. C. Trumbull, *The Covenant of Salt*.

Then follows the gradual dissociation of the god from his animal form and his appearance in human shape. At first in districts where a certain animal has been venerated the god is represented as a man with the head of that animal. Then finally the god casts off all semblance of the animal, and henceforth this is simply regarded as being sacred to him. This is the position reached by the Greek polytheism of historic times where every god and goddess has a sacred animal or plant "associated" with him or her in ritual and in art, as the hind with Artemis and the laurel with Apollo. Such association points to an origin in totemism, but that the ancestors of the Greeks were totemists is not dependent on this inference. Leading scholars are agreed that all peoples on a "natural basis of subsistence" are totemists. It has been maintained, and the point is of interest, that only through totemism could be effected the domestication of plants and animals which leads to the civilisation that proves fatal to totemism, and hence "the mere fact that a people possesses material civilisation requires us to believe that in a state of savagery it was totemist."<sup>1</sup>

In totemism religion begins, as morality takes rise in the taboo—the flat positive prohibition for which no reason or explanation is offered. In these are the roots of human society; the words are American and Polynesian, but the institutions are world-wide, and there is no race but has passed through the stage of the totem and the taboo.<sup>2</sup>

The worship of the spirit of an animal species is probably the earlier form of totemism, but trees and plants believed to exercise power over the fortunes of men were taken for totems as well, and as there were clans named from an

<sup>1</sup> Jevons, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>2</sup> For survivals of totemism and the taboo among the Israelites see Reinach, *Orpheus: A General History of Religions*, 178–183.

animal totem, so there were clans of the tamarind or the palm. Tree worship forms a curious and interesting chapter in the history of religion, but it is one that lies apart from the subject of our consideration. We may note in passing certain survivals that appear in recent times. Since the tree totem was present not only in the tree but in every branch of it, "presumably the god was originally present in the switch of rowan with which the Scottish milkmaid protects her cattle from evil spirits."<sup>1</sup> When we see, as may frequently be seen, a sapling set up on top of a house in course of construction, "for luck," as men say, we see an unconscious reproduction of a religious observance of our primitive ancestors who planted a tree at the door of the tent, or fastened a branch on the roof of the hut, to secure the protecting presence of their god. The dance around the Maypole, a custom that formerly prevailed in rural England, is a direct descendant from the rites in honor of the tutelary genius of the Teutonic village community. In one of his *Twice Told Tales* Hawthorne tells of a real marriage at the Maypole of Merrymount, and this accords with the primitive usage that a marriage ceremony must be in presence of the tree-god, and follow certain procedures to invoke his favor. In some cases the couple were married first to trees and then to each other.

Far more important to the study of the derivation of sacramentalism is the cult of cereals and food-plants which arose in the era of their cultivation. It followed on the lines of the old ideas. As the tree-totem resided in the branch, so any sheaf of grain contained the vegetation spirit, and if preserved in the house would bring it under the divine protection during the interval between autumn and spring, when there was no plant life in the fields. As animal totemism developed toward anthropo-

<sup>1</sup> Jevons, *op. cit.*, 209.

morphic conceptions, so gradually the immanent plant-god was taken to have a human shape, and it became the custom to make the ears of grain into the rude form of a female doll, clothed in a rich garment and called the Corn Maiden, or Corn Mother, according to the seasons of seed-time or harvest. This stage of advance compares with the half human, half animal shape of the totem god in Egypt. Next, the goddess is represented in purely human form, but her name, her attributes and functions show that her connection with the plant is maintained. Finally, it is forgotten that she was originally a plant, and of such origin there is only a survival in association, as when Chicomecoatl carries maize-stalks in her hands and Demeter wears a garland of wheat, and cereals are the offerings to both. We find that the cereal divinity is commonly a goddess, and this seems to be owing to the fact that horticulture, which preceded agriculture, was the province of the women.

The development of the sacramental meal in plant worship follows that of the conception of the totem god. In the primitive period there is a solemn annual meal at which all members of the community must eat of the seeds or fruits, and of which no fragments must be left. Next, this eating of the god changes to eating with the god, and the divine clansman is invited to partake of the first fruits of the new crop, which at a later day will be offered to him, or her, as gift or tribute. Then when the time comes for the cereal totem to be regarded as a spirit which, if seen, would appear in human form, it is represented by a dough image fashioned in human shape. Such an image of Chicomecoatl is described by the Spanish missionary, Father Acosta, and among the Teutons a dough doll was made in the shape of a little girl and distributed in portions to be eaten by the congregation. Frequently we find a mingling of tree worship with that

of the cereal divinity, as where in certain Gallic tribes a fir tree was planted on the last load of grain and a man of dough fastened to its top, which was eaten by the assembled people. In Peru a tree was felled, cleared of its branches, and set up with a paste figure of the god on top, which was brought to the ground by the arrows of the worshippers, a procedure analogous to the solemn slaughter of the animal totem. This early rite of sacrifice is also found in Mexico, where once a year a paste idol of the god was made and the priest hurled a dart into its breast; this was called "killing the god so that his body might be eaten." Father Acosta gives a vivid description of the ceremonies on this occasion, closing as follows:

Then the priests gave these consecrated pieces to the people in manner of a communion, who received it with such tears, fear, and reverence as it were an admirable thing, saying they did eat the flesh and bones of God, and such as had any sick folk demanded thereof for them and carried it away with great reverence and veneration.<sup>1</sup>

In the final stage of this development the representative character of dough or paste has become so firmly established that it is no longer felt necessary to fashion it into an image of the deity. In Peru morsels of maize loaves, mingled with the blood of white sheep, were handed to the communicants, which "all took with such care that no particle was allowed to fall to the ground, this being looked upon as a great sin." Father Acosta witnessed this "communion" with the sun-god, though he doubts "if it be lawful to use this word in so devilish a matter." This case is an instance of the spread of cereal rites to the worship of non-cereal divinities, together with the appropriation of an important element in the ritual of animal

<sup>1</sup> Acosta—Grimston's translation in the Hakluyt Society's edition—quoted by Jevons, *op. cit.*, 217



sacrifice. Commonly however the juice of fruits, or wine—"the blood of the grape"—became the substitute for the blood of sacrifice, as bread—or among the Mayas consecrated wafers—had taken the place of the flesh of the animal victim.

With this we arrive at the sacramental elements which have maintained their standing down to the present day. Father Grueber was properly shocked at witnessing the use of them among the Tatars:

This only do I affirm [he writes], that the Devil so mimics the Catholic Church in these parts that although no European or Christian has ever been there, still in all essential things they agree so completely with the Roman Church as even to celebrate the sacrifice of the Host with bread and wine; with mine own eyes have I seen it.<sup>1</sup>

Let us note the significance of this inadvertent confession. It has been said that "there is not a rite or ceremony still practiced and revered among us that is not the lineal descendant of barbaric thought and usage"<sup>2</sup>; and in a more literal sense than he intended Augustine's words hold good: "That which is now called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and in fact was with the human race from the beginning."<sup>3</sup> It is indeed no discredit to a religious institution that it derives from a humble origin, for that cannot be more humble than man's own.

<sup>1</sup> Thevenot, *Divers Voyages*, iv—quoted in Jevons, *op. cit.*, 219.

<sup>2</sup> Clodd, *Myths and Dreams*, 168.

<sup>3</sup> "Those who find the exposition of pagan elements in the essence of Christianity repugnant to their sentiment are inclined to accept the dictum that 'origin does not affect validity.' I imagine the facts of religious psychology make somewhat against the aphorism. At all events, in the history of creeds validity has been very often found to maintain itself mainly by an appeal to origin; and as comparative religion is much concerned with origins, it is indirectly concerned with those claims of validity that support themselves by such an appeal." Farnell, *The Evolution of Religion*, 85.

All things come of low beginning: but they must *come*. If the outcome of a thing is the truth of it, if its true character only appears in its complete development, then the development must reach completion. Man is not man until he rises from the brute through the savage and the barbarian to civilisation, throwing off and leaving behind him the characteristics of the stages he has passed through. So with regard to religious ideas and forms of worship: the question is not what they were, but what they are. Are they perpetuations of early belief and usage, or are they a higher outgrowth which has emerged from these and discarded them? Are they adequate expressions of the modern man's enlightened thought and finer feeling, or are they survivals of the thought and feeling of a lower plane of life which as concerns all secular affairs he has long forgotten? Browning gives us the sentiment of the Renaissance time when the bishop gives order for his tomb, whence he may

“Hear the blessed mutter of the mass,  
And see God made and eaten every day.”

And a modern instance witnesses to the survival of the totemistic idea in our day. When the Eucharistic Congress was held in London in 1908, the Prime Minister, in deference to an obsolete statute, or to the outcry of intolerance, objected to the bearing of the Host in procession through the public streets, one of the ceremonies on the programme of the Congress. The English Archbishop announced to a Catholic mass meeting this interference of the government, and added: “Though not permitted to *carry our Divine Master with us*, I trust that all present will by the fervor of their singing make Westminster one great sanctuary of the Blessed Sacrament.”<sup>1</sup> A fetish is

<sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, September 13, 1908.

defined as any material object into which by means of invocations or incantations a spirit has been induced to enter, in order that one may receive from it supernatural aid or benefit. It is a definition that seems to fit with exactness the consecrated elements of the Mass.

The intent of the sacrificial meal was to bring men into union with their god—a literal corporeal union effected by the eating of the animal or plant which was believed to be an incarnation of the Divine. The practice accorded with the notions and sentiments of early men and responded to their religious needs, and in its day it served its purpose. But the time came when the ritual of sacrifice, even though it had outgrown the crudity of its primitive conception, would no longer satisfy a deeper and clearer-sighted religious feeling, and earnest reformers denounced it as unworthy of the deity and demoralising to the worshippers. The Hebrew prophets attacked the sacrificial worship in its principle—the materialism, the externalism which sought communion with the Divine through ceremonial rites. The ritual of the sanctuaries had borrowed much from the surrounding heathenism, but the prophetic protest was not directed against its heathenish character but against ritualism as such, and in place of communion through an external mediation they insisted on inward immediate communion in the conscience and the heart. This “Gospel before Christ” was of a nature too spiritual to win the mind of the people, its preachers were forcibly silenced by the priestly partisans of religious conservatism, and animal sacrifice still held its old place in Jewish worship in the day of the Prophet of Nazareth, eight centuries after the abortive attempt at reform.

The sixth century B.C. brought with it an innovation in religion nothing less than revolutionary.<sup>1</sup> Hitherto religion had meant the relation to the Divine maintained

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jevons, *op. cit.*, ch. xxiii.

by the clan, the tribe, the civic community. For when the city-state arose from the fusion of tribes and their settlement in one local habitation, religion was still an affair of the State, and the individual's religion was one with his citizenship, was given in his membership in the religio-political society. The innovation was the rise of private religious associations, with new cults and rites. in which membership was voluntary and open to all, and so now for the first time a man could belong to a religious community which was distinct from the State. A choice between the worship to which he was born and another was offered him, and the exercise of this freedom of choice was the first step toward consciousness of religion as a personal relation of the soul to its god. The new movement originated in the East, where a series of political disasters had shaken the faith of many peoples in their national gods, and a sense of need led them to seek a closer union with those gods, or with others more powerful. This impulse tended to the discarding of the gift or the tribute theory of sacrifice which prevailed in the official worship and a reversion to the primitive conception of it as a communion. The wave of religious revivalism gradually spread from Semitic lands into the Greek world, where it not only gave rise to the Dionysiac worship, the Orphic and Pythagorean schools, and the Eleusinian Mysteries, but led to the adoption and naturalisation of the Oriental cults which were pouring in like a flood over all the West, bringing with them the mythical ideas and ritual practices which had come down from the ancient past. When Christianity made its appearance in the Empire the worship of Attis and Adonis, of Cybele, Isis, and Mithra, and many another, contended for popular acceptance, for they too, in common with Christianity, possessed the attraction of an appeal to the individual; they too claimed the wife apart from her husband, the

slave apart from his master.<sup>1</sup> Their votaries travelled through the cities, setting up new shrines and calling upon each and all to enter into communion with their saving deity. The gloom or splendor of their Mysteries fascinated the imagination, and their priests and acolytes made hosts of eager converts, until it seemed as if the conquered East was setting forth in turn for the religious conquest of the world.

It was in face of these entrenched forces, and on territory held in adverse possession, that Christianity strove to establish itself, and to this end it was obliged to be all things to all men and to take into itself much of the old heathenism which it found impossible wholly to reject. The situation was in effect the one described by Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, 2):

The positive Semitic religions had to establish themselves on ground already occupied by older beliefs and usages; they had to assimilate what they could not displace, and whether they rejected or absorbed the elements of the older religions, they had at every point to reckon with them. No positive religion that has moved men has been able to start with a *tabula rasa* and express itself as if religion were beginning for the first time; in form, if not also in substance, the new system must be in contact all along the line with the older ideas and practices which it finds in possession. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience, and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which religious feeling is embodied, and without speaking a language which men accustomed to these old forms can understand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For these cults see Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, and Fraser's learned work, *The Golden Bough*, part iv.

<sup>2</sup> To a similar effect writes A. Sabatier (*Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion*, 208): "La sémence Chrétienne n'est jamais semée dans un terrain neutre et vacant. La place est toujours occupée par des traditions



At the outset Baptism and the Lord's Supper were not regarded as sacraments, nor were they practices essentially distinctive of the Christian community. Baptism was the same symbolical act of purification as that of John's disciples, except for the acknowledgment of Jesus, and the Love Feast differed from the common meal of the many and various associations, religious and secular, of the Greco-Roman world only in so far as their faith in Jesus was felt to be the bond of the brotherly fellowship of the believers. The sacramental significance ascribed to these simple usages takes rise in the mystical teaching of Paul. At first the prayer offered at the Supper was simply a "grace" or thanksgiving for God's bounties, and hence the Agape came to be called the Eucharist. Then it received from Paul the added significance of a memorial of the Lord's last supper with his disciples, and finally a third meaning, foreign to the mind of the first Christians, by which it was closely related to the rites of the Pagan Mysteries. For the sacramental idea once conceived, or adopted, its mode of expression was inevitably shaped by the influence of beliefs and ritual usages familiar to the Gentile converts.<sup>1</sup> As the worshippers of Attis or of Mithra sought communion with the divine life in their sacramental meal of consecrated bread and wine, or wine mingled with water, so the life of the Pauline community,

---

antérieures d'idées, de rites ou de coutumes, par des institutions qui ont fait souche et ont possession d'état. Le Christianisme ne peut donc s'enraciner nulle part sans entrer en conflit avec les puissances régnantes, sans livrer bataille à des préjugés, à des mœurs et à des superstitions qui naturellement résistent et, même vaincus, renaissent sous d'autres formes dans la religion victorieuse."

<sup>1</sup> "Unless the ideas of initiatory ceremonies as the portal of a religious society, and of the sacrifice of communion as a means of union with a saving deity, had already been widely spread—especially in Asia Minor and Syria, the countries of the earliest Christian propaganda—the history of the Christian sacraments would have been very different from what it was." Gardner, *The Growth of Christianity*, 133.

"the body of Christ," was sustained by the like mystic sacrament.<sup>1</sup> This analogy with heathen rites of worship, which Paul himself drew (I Cor. x, 16-21), is one that holds throughout in his teaching concerning the sacraments, and it cannot be explained as a chance coincidence. Evidence abounds to show the accord of Christian and heathen thought on this subject in later times. Thus Firmicus Maternus warns the postulant for initiation in the Mysteries of Cybele that he is about to eat poison and drink of the cup of death. Food of another kind it is that confers salvation and immortal life, and the misguided heathen is exhorted to seek the bread and cup of Christ.<sup>2</sup> That is, the sacramental principle is in both cases the same. The mistake of the votary of Cybele is not in the attempt to satisfy spiritual needs by means of liturgical rites, but in choosing the wrong rites. To a similar effect are the words of Cyril of Jerusalem that just as meats, simple in their nature, are polluted by the invocation of idols, so the simple water of baptism by invocation of Father, Son, and Spirit acquires a power of holiness. Such language expressed the trend of popular sentiment. From the opening of the second century "the growth of Mysteries was proceeding vigorously in both Christian and pagan circles, and Christian rites were rapidly becoming a celebration of mysteries."<sup>3</sup>

Christian baptism was baptism "into the name of

<sup>1</sup> Pfeiderer writes of the Mithra worship: "At one side stand the initiated, in animal masks which represent the being of the god under various attributes; thus they have 'put on' their god in order to place themselves in close fellowship with him. We are reminded of Paul's words that all who are baptised into Christ have 'put on' Christ, and that the bread we break in the Lord's Supper and the consecrated cup are the 'fellowship of the body and blood of Christ.'" *Primitive Christianity*, i, 63.

<sup>2</sup> The passage from the *De Errore Profanarum Religionum* (c. 347 A.D.) is quoted by Pfeiderer in his *Early Christian Conception of Christ*, 127.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, 94.

Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> This brings us to an idea that came down from the earliest times.<sup>2</sup> In primitive thought a personal name is not a mere appellation, but an integral part of the man’s self, or an independent hypostasis of his nature and being; according to this the Eskimo hold that a man consists of three parts, his body, his soul, and his name. Hence the cursing or denunciation of a man’s name works injury to the man himself. Hence too a change of name is equivalent to a change of personality, and becomes a method of escape from the evil fate that pursues the old name,—as when the prudent Dyak changes his name after an attack of illness, so that the demon who sent it may not recognise him. Again, the power for good or evil which a being owns can be communicated through its name, and so the Flamen Dialis would not pronounce the name of dog lest he should be contaminated by the unclean beast. It is a principle of magic that utterance of a name gives a hold over the person who bears it, and summoning the dead by name was the art of the necromancer. More mysteriously potent than all others were the names of the gods.<sup>3</sup> Knowledge of a divine name enabled one to exert power over the god himself, and the *Indigitamenta* (lists of such names) of the Roman pontiffs gave them the mastery of the spiritual world. It was a power that might be abused, and here is the explanation of the doctrine of “the ineffable Name,” common to three continents. It was the fear of indignity or injury to their god through the malicious use of his name that led a people to conceal it and forbid its utterance. Thus among the Jews:

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii, 16; xix, 5. Cp. iii, 6; iv, 10 and 12.

<sup>2</sup> See Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, 93–102.

<sup>3</sup> “The formula *nomina sunt numina* was valid in all the old religions of the Mediterranean area, including earlier and even later Christianity: the divine name was felt to be part of the divine essence and in itself of supernatural potency.” Farnell, *The Evolution of Religion*, 32.

the mysterious name of God which was never to be pronounced was written by means of four consonants; between these the vowels of Adonai, the Lord, were conventionally inserted, producing the name Jehovah. The idea that the name of God is taboo and should not be uttered is found among many races.<sup>1</sup>

This old superstition of real existence in names we meet with in the Old Testament and the New, and it was retained in Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The power by which Jesus healed the diseased and devil-possessed could be appropriated in his absence or after his death by invocation of his name. "The name of Jesus was regarded by the early Church as magical in itself. Arnobius says of him: 'Whose name when heard puts to flight evil spirits, imposes silence on soothsayers and augurs, and frustrates the efforts of magicians.'"<sup>3</sup> Though their original meaning is lost, phrases expressive of the primitive idea still hold a place in the service-books of the Anglican communion, such as: to the glory of thy holy Name; give thanks unto thy Name; we bless and praise thy Name; the Lord's Name be praised; in the Name and mediation of Jesus Christ, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Reinach, *Orpheus: A General History of Religions*, 177.

"How few who repeat the second clause of that prayer on which we have all been brought up reflect that the Name referred to, whatever it was, is now through long concealment totally lost." Brinton, *op. cit.*, 98.

<sup>2</sup> A few instances may be cited: Ex. xxiii, 21: Obey his voice, for my name is in him; Jer. vii, 12: Shiloh where I have set my name; Ps. liv, 1: Save me by thy name; Ps. lxxiv, 7: The dwelling-place of thy name; Malachi i, 11: My name shall be great among the Gentiles; Matt. vii, 22: Did we not prophesy by thy name, etc.; xviii, 20: Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them; John xx, 31: That believing ye may have life through his name; Acts iii, 6: In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk; 16: His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong; iv, 7: By what power or by what name have ye done this; I Cor. 13: Were ye baptised into the name of Paul; 15: Lest any man should say that ye were baptised into my name.

<sup>3</sup> Brinton, *op. cit.*, 100.

In Baptism this power of the spoken name is reinforced by that of the life-giving water, and here again we come upon a primitive belief. In Eastern lands, where the fertility of the soil is largely dependent upon the water supply, running, or "living" water was an object of the highest reverence, as instinct with divine life and energy.<sup>1</sup> Sanctuaries arose beside the spring, or river source, where the service rendered to the sacred fount implied that the divinity addressed inhabited the water. Hence the later anthropomorphic deity is born of the water—as Aphrodite sprang from the sea-foam; or the waters obtain their sanctity from the god's descending into them—as the angel who came down to trouble the pool of Bethesda gave it its healing power (John v, 4); or, in other cases, the curative properties of mineral springs, which naturally enjoyed a special reverence, are ascribed to the exertion of their immanent divine energies. Again, certain waters, like those of Aphaca, where a cataract falls into a deep gorge, were credited with mysterious properties and became the seats of oracles; and it was owing to the divine power in water that the Pythia at Delphi, who drank of the Castalian spring, was brought into the condition of prophetic ecstasy and inspiration. So also, according to Wellhausen (*Proleg. to Hist. Israel*, 343), it is the oldest Hebrew tradition that the Law took its origin in the sentences pronounced by Moses at the sanctuary of Kadesh beside the "fountain of judgment" (Gen. xiv, 7), so called because cases too hard for man were there referred to the divine decision.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The same animistic idea appears in Tertullian's *De Baptismo* (ch. v) where he derives the saving efficacy of baptism from the supernatural power indwelling in water since the creation, when the Spirit of God brooded over the waters—a power heightened by the invocation of the name of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> On this subject see Robinson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 166–184. The author considers that the ordeal by water derives from the water oracle



The first effect sought in Baptism was purification from sin. To understand how the rite was supposed to possess this efficacy we must look back to the ideas underlying the old rituals of purification. The first of these is that impurity or defilement is contracted from having to do with certain things or persons: for instance, blood, a dead body, a new-born child and its mother; for the sense of a divine mystery in life makes all these especially taboo. In the conception of taboo there is no distinction between things holy and things unclean, both of which are sources of vague, mysterious danger. Thus the flesh of swine was taboo to the Syrians, but whether because the animal was accounted sacred or unclean does not appear. There was no practical difference between the infection of holiness and the pollution of uncleanness, and it was on account of its holiness that the Jewish Book of the Law "defiled the hands"; so among the Persians the corpse of the priest, the most holy person, had the greatest defiling power.

The Latin term *sacer* has the double meaning of holy and accursed: from the same Greek root, ἅγ, spring a word connoting holiness and a word meaning pollution. Primeval thought holds together in a vague unity ideas that afterward differentiate and become antithetical.<sup>1</sup>

It is in the notions of unclean and holy that we find the origin of mourning attire and of "Sunday best" clothes. His contact with the deceased defiles the clothes a mourner wears, and they can no longer be used after the days of his impurity are over. So he keeps to one set of mourning

---

that spoke by accepting or rejecting the offering of the applicant. So in witchcraft trials the accused who did not sink was proved to be guilty, according to the old belief that the sacred element rejects the criminal. Among the Jews the ordeal was by drinking holy water. Numbers v, 11-31.

<sup>1</sup> Farnell, *The Evolution of Religion*, 97.

garments, not to spoil too many, and they must be of a special color, so as to warn others against approaching him and taking the contagion of uncleanness. Again, the clothes a man wears at divine worship acquire a sanctity which renders them taboo for use on ordinary occasions. Special garments were therefore reserved for this purpose, and when at an early day sacrifices became occasions of social festivity, holy dress became one with gala dress and the clothes of worship would be the best clothes the wearer possessed.

Besides holy things, inherently taboo, anything might become tabooed: common utensils; food, under certain conditions; strangers, as belonging to strange gods; a name, or a day—*e.g.*, the seventh day of the week when all work was forbidden, a taboo day taken over by the Babylonians from the indigenous Akkadians of Mesopotamia and descending to the Hebrews, or the *ἡμέραι ἀποφοράδες* and *dies nefasti* of the Greeks and Romans in historic times.<sup>1</sup> Amidst the multiplicity of things taboo it was scarcely possible to walk so warily as to escape the infection of uncleanness. To avoid direct contact with the person or thing tabooed would be difficult enough, but the case was made harder for the well-meaning man when merely to catch sight of the tabooed object, or be seen by the tabooed person, was no less defiling than to touch, taste, or handle. Under such conditions of daily life it became a necessity to provide means whereby one might purge himself from this practically inevitable uncleanness. Fire suggested itself as in its own nature a consumer of impurities, and the custom still prevalent among the German peasantry in certain districts of leaping over a bonfire on midsummer eve is probably the relic of an an-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tiele, *Outlines of the History of Religion*, 83-84. It is curious that the Jewish Sabbath, so rigidly observed by the Pharisees and the English Puritans, was not even of Semitic origin.

cient rite of fire-purification. Ashes too, as possessing a power derivative from fire, might be employed for purposes of lustration; *e.g.* the ashes of the red heifer in the Hebrew cathartic ritual. On the other hand, liquid substances, perhaps on account of their greater mobility, were thought more dangerous conductors than dry ones of taboo infection. In Persia Jews were not allowed to go out of the house on a rainy day lest the impurity of a strange religion, conducted through the rain, should pass to the Mazdeans.<sup>1</sup> From this an ingenious conclusion was drawn. If liquids have a natural affinity with contagion, then if we take them in an uninfected state and use them for lustration, they will readily absorb the impurity that clings to us and rid us of it. This view of the matter, combining with the old reverence for water as possessed of divine powers, made that element the most widely accepted vehicle of ritual purification.

In course of time the rites of purification from technical uncleanness gradually acquired an ethical import—although the ethical sentiment evolving was somewhat blind and feeble, like other new-born things—and it was believed that ablutions or aspersions could cleanse a man from sin and guilt as well as from outward defilement. As sprinkling with water removes the contagion of the corpse from the relatives of the deceased, so the murderer may be purified of his crime in like manner, though his is a more difficult case in that the water must be drawn from fourteen different springs. This extension of the cathartic idea will be intelligible if we consider that the odd, and to us irrational, beliefs of early men come in great part from the drawing of fallacious analogies, and from mistaking a mental association of ideas for a real relation of things—as, for instance, since blood is of all things most taboo, therefore red berries are taboo because they re-

<sup>1</sup> Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta*, quoted in Farnell, *op. cit.*, 99.

semble it in color. Furthermore, we have to bear in mind that in the view of primitive men the physical and the spiritual were by no means sharply distinguished; the attributes of either were interchangeable, and the same word stood for corporeal impurity and the pollution of the soul.<sup>1</sup> The Zulus say, You are dirty, when they mean, You have done wrong; and this is no metaphor, but the bodily state is looked upon as transferred inward.<sup>2</sup> And so, owing to the affinity or correlation of things material and spiritual, the phrases, a pure heart, an unclean thought, the stain of sin, were originally understood in a quite literal sense, and it was naturally supposed that sin, like a physical smirch, could be washed away. In Peru, for example, there was a ceremony of purification when the people led by the priests marched out to bathe in the river, crying, Go forth all evils! Though the ceremonial purity with which a man is thus outwardly clothed is a quality in no way belonging to the man himself, yet for primitive ways of thought it was all-sufficient. And the primitive ideas were long-lived. The Pharisees were not peculiarly to blame for attaching equal importance to the ceremonial and the moral commandments of the Law. These were of equal sanctity and obligation in the eyes of all early peoples, or rather no such distinction as we make was recognised. For there was no difference between wilful and involuntary sin. The intentions of the taboo-breaker have no effect upon the consequences to himself. It may be in ignorance or accidentally that he violates a taboo, but his uncleanness comes upon him as certainly as one receives an electric shock from an electric current; for the taboo acts like a law of nature and falls as the rain

<sup>1</sup> Even in historic times spirit was still conceived not as purely immaterial, but as a finer, rarer mode of matter; and such was the conception of St. Paul, I Cor. xv. Cp. Hausrath, *Times of the Apostles*, iii, 113.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie, *Among the Zulus*, 170.

falls upon the just and unjust. Now, when sin is the same thing whether or not it have a moral quality, or when the idea of morality has not clearly emerged to view, so that no essential difference appears between deliberate wrong doing and a ritualistic offence, then a mechanical rite of purification may well seem all that need be required to clear and restore alike the moral or the technical sinner. But when an enlightened psychology has divested the conception of sin of its materialistic associations, and with the advance of ethical consciousness it comes to be regarded as a purely inward corruption of the soul, then the ground and *raison d'être* of the archaic rituals is taken away and they no longer have a modern use—unless it be as merely symbolic rites. And in such use there is always danger to the uneducated worshipper. There is no harm—if some can see no good—in a symbolic rite which is understood to be merely such, but if it is believed to have in itself a spiritual efficacy we are back in primitive materialism.

The practice of infant baptism had no place in the early Church, where baptism was taken seriously; it was the later adoption of a rite of world-wide extension, from the Teutonic tribes, who plunged the baby into running water, to the Aztec midwife bathing her new-born charge with the prayer, "May this water purify and whiten thy heart and wash away all that is evil." It is interesting, by the way, to find that the Mayas of Yucatan called infant baptism the "second birth." In the view of the early Church it was at the baptism of Jesus, when the Spirit descended upon him, that he became Messiah and Son of God. Later on, when the belief in his miraculous birth arose, his divine sonship was antedated to the moment of conception, and the baptism of a divine being ceased to have any definite meaning or apparent purpose. With this, baptism as such, the baptism of believers, lost its primi-



tive moral and spiritual significance, and became an *opus operatum* requiring no intelligence on the part of the recipient. So conservative a scholar as Dr. Gardner condemns the baptism of infants—since it dispensed with the profession of faith and repentance required from adults—as “a reversion to materialism and an abandonment of the spirit of Christ” (*The Growth of Christianity*, 137). The primitive man seems to reappear in the Jesuit missionary to the Hurons who surreptitiously sprinkled a few drops of holy water on a baby’s brow, with a muttered formula, and thought he was thereby saving a heathen soul. That such an act was prompted by a notion of the sacrament as a magic charm which may properly be called superstitious will perhaps be generally admitted, but is it other than an extreme application of sacramental principles that obtain wide acceptance today? What exact meaning, one is moved to ask, attaches to the term “mystical” in that prayer of the Episcopal Baptismal Office: “Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin”? And again, in what sense are we to understand the statement that “none can enter into the Kingdom of God except he be regenerate and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost,” and the closing prayer that God may grant that as the baptised child “is made partaker of the death of His Son, he may also be partaker of his resurrection”?

These words bring us to a second effect of Christian Baptism, according to the faith of the Church, and again a glance at its antecedents in primitive and heathen thought may be worth our while. The Pauline teaching of mystical union with the Christ in his death and resurrection, a doctrine entirely strange to the first Christians, was nothing new to the converts acquainted with the rites of Adonis, Osiris, and Dionysos in which the god who dies and returns to life—originally the vegetation spirit slain

by the chill breath of winter to revive with the return of spring—guarantees by his resurrection from death a like deliverance to his votaries. This myth of the dying and reviving god, arising from man's yearly experience of the seasonal changes, was naturally wide-spread—that of the Teutonic Balder is perhaps the most familiar—and it carried with it rites of sorrow and of joy believed to be influential in preserving the divine life in growing things from threatened destruction and helping forward the victorious resurrection. When in later days man's anxiety for the life of nature gave place to concern for his own life after death, then the old rituals were modified and now brought to the initiated the pledge of a life to come. At the spring festival of Adonis at Antioch, which was preceded by a season of fasting, the death of the god was represented on the first day, amidst the lamentations of the worshippers gathered around his bier, on the next his burial, and on the third his resurrection was proclaimed, and in token of his translation to heaven his image was made to rise in air.<sup>1</sup> In these ceremonies the belief that the worshippers became partakers of the god's risen life through mystical participation in his death was visually expressed in symbolic rites, and the whole celebration closed with the Hilaria, or feast of rejoicing.

In many of the Mysteries the principal ceremony of initiation was a baptism with holy water, including the signing of the forehead with a covenant sign, and by this the neophyte was cleansed from past guilt and recreated

<sup>1</sup> A similar ceremony is a feature of the Easter celebration in the Greek Church at the present day. It accords with the third day observances of the Adonis festival that Paul regards the Ascension as following immediately upon the Resurrection; it was the heavenly Christ who appeared to Peter and the others. The Apostle borrows from the Mysteries the simile he makes use of in I Cor. xv: the grain of wheat which springs into life when planted in the earth is the Eleusinian symbol of the immortal soul.

to a new life. In the Mithra liturgy this baptism is represented as a mystical dying and rebirth, and the initiated speak of themselves as "reborn for eternity." Firmicus Maternus is so impressed with the resemblance of the Mysteries to the sacramental system of the Church that he exclaims: "Truly the Devil has Christians of his own," and Tertullian explains the Mithraic rites as an aping of Christian usages by the demons. Considering, however, that the heathen Mysteries were much older than the Christian it would seem that the aping was the other way about. So exact indeed is the correspondence of these pagan ideas with Paul's doctrine of Christian baptism in Rom. vi, that the fact of their historical connection seems scarcely disputable.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that Paul had some acquaintance with the Mithra worship, for as early as the time of Pompey Tarsus had become a seat of that cult and it made its way westward from that point. Pfeleiderer remarks that no other place offered a better opportunity for observation of the heathen religions. At Antioch, however, it seems safe to say, their influence first made itself felt. There in the mixed congregation of Christian Hellenists and their Syrian converts the new faith declared itself as one distinct from Judaism, and its deliverance from the fetters of Jewish rites and ceremonies could only be effected by replacing them with new ones of its own. But ritual practices can even less than civic constitutions be created out of hand and from nothing; they must attach themselves to something already existing and rooted in the time-honored past. In the situation in which it found itself the new community could do no other than look to the heathen environment and

<sup>1</sup> "The idea commonly expressed in the mystic initiations, that the catechumen died to his old life and was born again, was eagerly adopted and developed by the new religion and left its imprint on the ritual." Farnell, *op. cit.*, 57.

take into the Christian worship those mystical rites which could be brought into connection with the person of Christ and interpreted by the Pauline theology. To this was owing in great part the success of the Gentile mission. The votary of Adonis or of Mithra was not called upon to abandon the practices of his old religion, but to transfer them to the worship of the new divinity, Christ.<sup>1</sup> This was Christianity made easy. But in so far as it admits its dependence on the external mediation of material rites a religion of the spirit is no longer itself. The "success" of Christianity on these terms seems success of a somewhat questionable sort, and its victory over heathenism looks not wholly unlike a surrender. At least, as so often happens, the conquerors were to some extent subdued by the vanquished; and if Augustine could look complacently on the borrowing of the rites and symbols of paganism as a "spoiling of the Egyptians," the Egyptians had their revenge. Instead of an open Gospel of trustful piety, fraternal love, and a purer way of life, Christianity was made into a Mystery, a syncretism of archaic superstitions, and loaded with the heritage of the heathen past.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine's view of the matter is nevertheless shared by many. Dr. Gardner, for example, speaks of "the spoils taken by Christianity from the mystic religions of the East" (*Growth of Christianity*, 130: See 92 for the same

<sup>1</sup> "Converts who found it hard to part with consecrated phrases and forms of devotion might address Jesus in epithets sacred to the sun." Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, 622.

It may be added that Sunday, the "first day of the week" of Christian worship, was the day sacred to Mithra, and the great festival of that Spirit of Light, whose worship borrowed much from heliolatry, was held on December 25th, the birthday of the unconquered sun—*dies natalis invicti solis*, as the old calendars have it—and the day taken over by the Church for the feast of the Nativity of Christ, the "sun of righteousness."

<sup>2</sup> This transformation, so far as concerns the sacraments, is fully exhibited by Dean Hatch in his Hibbert Lectures, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*—Lecture x, *The Influence of the Mysteries*.

phrase), and remarks that "the debt of Christianity in this direction is being more fully recognised year by year" (*Ib.*, 131). His phrase in the chapter titles, the "Baptism" of Hellas, of Asia, signifies the Christianisation of the rival cults, but how largely it was a baptism received, and its effect the heathenising of Christianity, may be read in his own admissions. He tells us that in setting Christ in the place of Mithra or Zeus Soter Paul "wrested from the heathen one of the most effective of their weapons, and raised the idea of salvation by as much as the Christ of the Church was higher than the deities of paganism" (134). The comment suggests itself that the weapon was two-edged, and its actual effect was to lower the Christ of the Church to the level of the pagan deities. In justification of the taking over of heathen rites and ritual ideas it is alleged that the converts to Christianity "expected in the new religion the satisfaction of needs which had been met by the ancient cults," and that "Christianity had to satisfy the same religious feelings which the rival religions had endeavored to meet (138 and 125). But were these feelings that ought to have been fostered and needs that ought to have been catered to? Considering their nature it would seem that Christianity no more "had to satisfy" them than one has to satisfy a child's demand for indigestible cake. Again, we are told that "the triumph of metaphysics in early Christianity" is not to be regretted, for "it was necessary to the vitality of the Church" (98 and 101). This reminds us of the old story of the thief's plea to Richelieu, "One must live," and the reply, "I don't see the necessity for it." Jesus too might have consulted the religious needs or adopted the doctrines of the Pharisees, and this was plainly necessary to his vitality, but he would die rather than compromise the truth. On the whole the view of Christianity as an "assimilation and



consecration" of Judaism, Greek speculation and superstitions whose "roots stretched far back into the soil of primitive religion" seems to leave the part of the Founder of Christianity—as Jesus is repeatedly called in this book—relatively insignificant; but happily it is one that to the same extent relieves him of responsibility for the structure actually founded. The truth is, the men of the decadent Greco-Roman world took the new religion that came to them and made it into what they wished it to be—a religion of sacramentalism and sacerdotalism, of dogma and orthodoxy, of legality and blind obedience and spiritless routine; a religion in every cog and crank of its machinery the absolute contradiction of the life-giving teachings of the Master it professed to adore.

---

## NOTE

This section may conclude with a brief mention of some of the many features of earlier and later Christianity which are traceable to an origin in primitive usages and ways of thought. The ecstatic "speaking with tongues," so closely related to the raptures and ravings of the orgiastic Mystery-cults, derives from the animistic beliefs in "possession" by a supernatural being, and in the value of words independently of their meaning.<sup>1</sup> In the immaturity of the human mind, when its reasoning powers lay dormant and it had not fully come to self-possession, the blind activities of the subliminal consciousness held unchecked sway, and a pathological subjective condition which none could rightly understand or account for was held to betoken the presence of a divine

<sup>1</sup> "The wild and unbridled enthusiasm of ancient religious usages was here renewed in Christianity on Greek soil. Paul was conscious that it had got the length of a disease."

Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age*, ii, 275.

agency. Their incoherent volubility of utterance which made evident their inspiration, or "enthusiasm"—a technical term signifying being in the god, or filled with the god—won the people's reverence for the Shaman and the Mantis and the other progenitors of the prophet and the priest.<sup>1</sup> And since words had in themselves an occult power, it mattered not that the outpourings of these holy men were unintelligible. Indeed the most potent of all words were those whose meaning was lost—as in the case of the Salian Litany which the young Aurelius recited with pious care—or those which never had any meaning at all, such as charms and spells, the rhythmic formulæ of exorcism and the cabalistic jargon of medieval diviners. Not only a phrase or two, but long addresses might be uttered in articulate sounds conveying no sense whatever; it was the divine spirit expressing itself through human organs, but in speech unknown to human ears. This was the gift of "tongues" which St. Paul treats of in I Cor. xiv, and which the author of Acts mistakes for discourse in a foreign language (Acts ii, 4-12).<sup>2</sup>

When the Eucharist had become a sacrifice in the view of the Church special robes were prescribed for the celebrant, and the cope, alb, and chasuble were deemed necessary to his due performance of sacramental functions. These priestly vestments arrive at the last stage of a serial development, but for their origin we must go back to Totemism. The oldest form of garment appropriate to the sacrificial office was the skin of the victim,

<sup>1</sup> A luminous treatment of this subject may be found in A. Réville's *Prolégomènes de l'histoire des Religions*, Partie ii, chs. iv and v.

<sup>2</sup> The real character of the Apostles' deliverances may be gathered from the verses next following (13-18), where we read that some thought the speakers intoxicated and Peter repelled the charge, explaining that what the people witnessed was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy: "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

and when the sacrificer appeared at the sanctuary clothed in such a skin, it was to signify his kinship with the holy animal, and as it were, envelop himself with its sanctity. The Assyrian cylinders represent the Dagon-worshippers bringing the fish-sacrifice to the altar of the Fish-god draped or disguised in fish skins; and at the annual sacrifice of a sheep to the Cyprian Aphrodite—really the Semitic sheep-goddess, Astarte, taken over by Greek worship—the priests as representatives of the religious community were clad in sheep skins. The old idea survived in the animal masks worn by the initiated in the Mystery-cults to which allusion has been made.<sup>1</sup>

The tonsure of the priest is a survival of the primitive hair-offering. The offering of one's blood, in renewal or confirmation of the blood-bond between the worshipper and his god, was a means of recommending oneself to the divine favor and of lending added force to one's petitions. We have an instance in the case of the priests of Baal, I Kings, xviii, 28. In later times the custom was retained in the milder form of puncturing the flesh—tattooing—in sign of one's dedication to the god. Similar in purpose and effect was the practice of shaving the head or cutting off the hair to make of it an offering. Frequently this was in connection with special vows or acts of devotion, such as the vow of the Nazarites described in Numbers vi. The hair-offering holds an important place in the religion of the Semitic peoples; in the Citium inscription barbers appear as stated ministers of the temple. It is found also among the Greeks—*e.g.* in the dedication of the hair of Achilles to the river-god Spercheus—and it is prescribed in the laws of the Incas. It seems to originate in the belief that the hair is a special seat of life and strength—as we read in the legends of Samson—since it continues to grow, and so to manifest life, in mature age.

<sup>1</sup> See W. Robertson Smith, *op. cit.*, 293, 310, and 438.

For the same reason nail-parings were a common offering, and possession of hair from a man's head, or cuttings from his nails, is in early magic a potent means of exerting control over him.

Saint worship derives from lines of long descent. In his famous work, *La Cité Antique*, Coulanges has shown how ancestor-worship was the creative principle of the patriarchal family among the early Greeks and Romans. Down to imperial times the Manes were revered as among the infernal gods, tombs were inscribed D. M. for *Diis Manibus*, and the occurrence of this D. M. in Christian epitaphs shows the retention by converts of the old beliefs. Ancestor-worship gave rise to the cult of "heroes"—demigods or deified men—which, confined at first to figures of the mythic or legendary past, came to be extended to founders of dynasties, lawgivers, sages, and even to athletes, or those whose eminence in any walk of life sufficiently impressed the popular imagination. A curious instance of apotheosis was that of Antinous, the favorite of Hadrian, whose temples were thronged for at least a century after the emperor's death had removed all interested motives to such devotion. This worship of the dead was taken over by Christianity either directly—as where the pagan hero is found lurking under the later disguise of the saint—or in principle, when Christians of reputed miraculous powers or exceptional piety were exalted to the rank of inferior divinities and received the prayers and adoration of their devotees. The people of each district were accustomed to celebrate the memorial day of their local deity or hero with festivities in his honor, and when converted to Christianity they wanted something to take the place of these, and found it in the feast-day of the saint. Moreover, the tutelary patrons of various crafts and classes—the gods who gave special help in special needs—were too near to the heart of pagan-

ism to be simply done away with. It was found easier to replace them with saints who should undertake their duties; thus the medieval trade-guilds, like the artisan fraternities of pagan times, had each its semi-divine guardian, and the division of spiritual labor was carried out minutely through a vast number of saintly functionaries, such as S. Hubert, patron of huntsmen, S. Crispin of cobblers, S. Cecilia of musicians, S. Valentine of lovers, and S. Fiacre of travelers—whose name was given to the cabs of Paris in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> In the canonisation of those who once were men and women all was left to the Pope, and thus the Vicar of Christ succeeded to the prerogative which the Delphic Oracle had exercised in the official consecration of the hero. Whatever be the orthodox dogma as to the status of the saint, experience proves that in the popular faith his worship means polytheism, and as the pagan godlet often usurped the place of the Olympians in men's regard, so in many outlying regions of Christendom the lower cult overshadowed the higher. It was commonly said of S. Francis: *Exaudit quos non ipse audit Deus*; such was the impiety fostered by the adoration of saints.

Mariolatry may be regarded as a natural development of Catholic faith in answer to the needs of the religious heart after the human Christ was lost in the divine and his place of mediator was left vacant; yet it came by ways prepared for it in pagan thought and aspiration, and it "cannot be adequately explained without looking beyond the limits of Christianity."<sup>2</sup> The cult of Kore-Parthenos, or ἡ ἁγία παρθένος, who offered men salvation after death, had

<sup>1</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii, 120-122. The author gives two striking illustrations of the direct succession of the Christian saint to the heathen deity, and two examples of modern hagiolatry which reveal a superstition not less extreme than that which prevailed a thousand years ago.

<sup>2</sup> Farnell, *op. cit.*, 38.



been established long before the Christian era on both sides of the Ægean, and that of the Phrygian Cybele, *θεῶν Μήτηρ*, the earliest invader from the East, was enshrined upon the Palatine during the second Punic war. The Orphic brotherhoods seated the Mother by the side of the Son-God and the Father-God, and in all the leading Mysteries a high place was assigned to the Mother and the Maid. There was a close connection between the two, traceable to the fact that their originals, the Corn-Maiden and the Corn-Mother, were different forms of the same goddess. We find the Virgin Artemis of Ephesus looked upon as in some sort a generative or maternal divinity, and it is perhaps more than a coincidence that it was this same city which hailed with acclamation the decree of the Synod pronouncing the Virgin Mary *θεοτόκος*, the Mother of God. There is nothing more salient in the history of later paganism than the deep impress which the worship of the Holy Virgin and of the Mother of Gods stamped upon the religious imagination of the Greco-Roman world. It could not but lend a stimulus to the growing exaltation of Mary, for the nascent thought of Christendom could not escape the influence of ideas and sentiments which so fascinated the minds of its converts. It is not in human nature that a religious tradition of such power should wholly lose its hold under a changed creed; rather it is in accordance with all experience that the personalities of these feminine divinities should be gradually fused with the ideal figure of the Virgin-Mother of Christ. It is plain that the propagation of Christianity owed much to its ability to direct into a new channel the current of earlier devotion. Traces of this process are visible in the history of the first six centuries, as when we find a rite picturing the death and rising of the Cretan Aphrodite reproduced in an early ritual of the feast of the Assumption; and the blending of an old cult with the new

in a period of transition shows itself in a curious rite described by Epiphanius as taking place in the Korion at Alexandria. On the night of the 5th January the naked image of Kore, with the sign of the Cross on brow and hands, was brought up from a crypt and carried seven times around the central shrine to the accompaniment of flutes, hymns, and dances, and at this hour, the votaries said, Kore, the Virgin, gave birth to the Eternal. Such a service, neither Christian nor purely pagan, seems an attempt to adapt an old ritual of Kore to Christian use.<sup>1</sup>

The veneration of images—of Christ, the Virgin and the saints—is a direct inheritance from the old Greek idolatry which had so strong a hold upon the religious and the artistic sentiment, and by way of spoiling the Egyptians many an old statue was confiscated by the Church and made to serve for a Christian image. There exists today in what once was Magna Grecia a so-called Madonna del Granato which has been identified with the “Hera, holding a Pomegranate” of Polycleitos, and in an epigram of the Anthology a S. Luke thus disclaims his title: “I am Herakles, the triumphant son of Zeus; I am not Luke, but they compel me.” The Black Virgin of Le Puy, said to be the work of the prophet Jeremiah, gifted with a vision of the unborn Mary, and brought from Babylon by a King of France, is in all probability an image of Druidic times witnessing to a local cult to which the Church gave a Christian consecration.<sup>2</sup> It is very well to say, as was said by the apologists of paganism, that the image is merely a symbol, helpful to quicken a spiritual devotion, but the view that prevailed among the people, and one that obtained the toleration and sometimes the encouragement of the Church, regarded the image as miraculous, as infused with divine power, if not itself the very divinity. Such was the belief of the Greeks who scourged

<sup>1</sup> Farnell, *op. cit.*, 33-37 and 65-73.

<sup>2</sup> Hanotaux, *Jeanne Darc*, 52.

the image of Pan when food was scarce, and of the Breton smith who threatened a saint's image with red-hot pincers to persuade it to heal his son.<sup>1</sup> The image so regarded seems near akin to the fetish, and as we have seen, fetishism is something not confined to primitive religions.

Similar in character was the superstitious reverence for relics which prevailed in medieval times, when the faithful carried them as amulets against ill fortune, and the wood of the true Cross could be found in shiploads throughout Europe. The Peruvians held that the bones of their priests gave out oracles, and while the Spanish missionaries contended vigorously against this heathenish delusion, they deemed it heresy to doubt the miracle-working powers of the bones of Christian saints.<sup>2</sup> Such relics were the most cherished possessions of a church or monastery. At the sanctuary of Le Puy, where there was a sacred stone possessed of healing powers—perhaps also taken over from the Druids, priceless relics were exhibited to the adoring contemplation of the pilgrims, among whom was the pious mother of Jeanne Darc. There was the milk of the Blessed Virgin, the veil which covered her newborn son, wine from the wedding at Cana, manna from the desert of Israel's wanderings, and many other treasures of like sort—treasures at least to the clergy who exploited them.

The practice of Confession appears to have arisen within the early monastic orders which in their origin had certain marked affinities with the Pagan religious fraternities, and in these Confession had place in the rites of initiation. It comes down from the times when the word was one with the thing itself and the "speaking out" of sin was the actual purgation of it. This was its meaning in the Mexican religion, in the Samothracian

<sup>1</sup> Farnell, *op. cit.*, 40-44.

<sup>2</sup> Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, 211-212.

Mysteries, in the Babylonian penitential liturgies, in all of which it was part of the ceremonial of purification. So too the Churching of Women, now a thanksgiving service, descends from the primitive cathartic ritual that purged away the dangerous pollution of child-birth; and the Consecration of Churches from the old-world rites that drove away demons from the house.<sup>1</sup> The priest's extended hand in blessing, a gesture that comes down from remote antiquity, derives from the same motive—to ward off demonic influences from the congregation. The cornelian stone in a bishop's ring was an amulet for the same purpose, for the cornelian was an effective prophylactic against demons. The ring itself had a magic power of the same kind, and one of the great relics that drew Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem was the ring of King Solomon by which he compelled the demons to serve him in the building of the temple. Again, the hand was effective in conveying beneficent influences as well as in defense against the maleficent. Ordination and Confirmation have their origin in the idea common to many primitive religions that a man can transmit a spiritual virtue to others through his hands laid on their heads. Thus we read that Moses by laying his hands on Joshua imparted to him the spirit of wisdom.

The doctrine of Apostolic Succession which has played so important a part in Church history has an origin earlier than Christianity. It was a very old Mediterranean tradition that the priest should be qualified by divine appointment through his direct descent from the first missionary who instituted the cult he ministered. Thus for example the priests of Poseidon traced their descent from those who brought his worship to their city at the time of its foundation. In the earlier time the succession was through a supposed genealogical descent; this was

<sup>1</sup> Farnell, *op. cit.*, 158-160.

afterward refined into a succession of spiritual powers, which however could only be maintained by a continuity of physical contact—the laying on of hands.<sup>1</sup>

Orientation in the erection of churches and the location of the altar and in the burial of the dead, declares its derivation from the sun-worship it was found necessary to conciliate, or “baptise,” and from the contrasted sentiments associated respectively with East and West which everywhere so deeply affected the primitive mind.<sup>2</sup>

Incense, which still rises in clouds in Christian churches, was an element in the ritual of Jews, Greeks, and Romans, as of nearly all ancient peoples of the world. The Iliad and the Old Testament tell us the intent of the burning of carcases of sheep and oxen: it is that the savor of the offering shall go up in smoke to heaven. In Eastern regions the burning of sandal-wood, myrrh, and cassia and compounds of various fragrant herbs and spices served the same purpose, and among the American aborigines the smoke from tobacco pipes. The underlying idea is the conception of spirit in lower animism as having the ethereal nature of smoke or mist, and hence offerings reduced to this condition are more readily transmitted to the spiritual beings toward whom the vapor ascends.<sup>3</sup>

The sacrament of Unction is traceable to the later fire-rituals in which the fat of the victim, as well as the blood, was the special altar food of the gods. Then, as possessing living virtues of blessing and sanctification, the sacrificial fat was applied to the persons of the worshippers. Later, when the agricultural stage succeeded the nomadic, the use of animal fats for unguents gave place to that of vegetable oils.<sup>4</sup> The anointing of Kings became an essential feature of the coronation ceremony; hospitality

<sup>1</sup> Farnell, *op. cit.*, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii, 421-429.

<sup>3</sup> Tylor, *op. cit.*, ii, 382-386.

<sup>4</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *op. cit.*, 382-384.



required one to honor a guest by anointing his head (Luke vii, 46), and it appears to have been an early Christian usage to anoint the sick in connection with prayers for their recovery (James v, 14). This practice still obtains to some extent in the Protestant Episcopal Church. In a letter to the *New York Times*, dated November 16, 1908, a priest relates how a woman in a dying condition, given up by the physicians, was miraculously restored to health after his administration of the sacrament of unction. He concludes:

The purpose of this is to remind your readers that the faith and practice of the ancient Church is still followed by clergy of the Episcopal Church, and that God blesses the use of the sacraments. Many clergymen could relate instances of recovery following the use of the sacrament of unction. The Church needs no new weapon: she only needs to use in humble faith the weapons with which our Blessed Lord equipped her.

This may be submitted without comment to the intelligence of the twentieth century.

### 3. *Creed and Dogma*

The Creed of the earliest Church was comprised, as I have said, in the simple confession of belief that Jesus was the Christ. Unfortunate as this identification proved, yet Jesus was not wholly lost in the Messiah; the memories of his life, the impression of his captivating personality could not be effaced. It was everything for the new religion that its illusory messianic faith was attached to the person of this loved Master, that the anointed King of the Jewish hope, with all his God-given power and authority, was one with the beautiful soul who had drawn those pictures of the spiritual Kingdom in the lakeside villages of Galilee. From the first to this day Jesus himself,

and the life one with God that he revealed, have been the strength of historic Christianity. Faith in the Christ might give hope of future salvation; faith in Jesus was an impulse to the higher life. The spell of his spirit was upon his disciples; it moved them to unite, and to draw others to unite with them, in the imitation of his life. It was in this, it was in men's lives as they tried to follow his leading, that Christianity first found expression. When we think how in after times to be a Christian came to mean one who gave assent to the orthodox dogmas, there is something winning in the simplicity of the phrase that names the faith of the first Christians: "that way," a way of living. Dean Hatch begins his Hibbert Lectures by calling attention to the contrast between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed, the one dealing with conduct, character, the spiritual life, the right relations of men to the heavenly Father and to one another, and the other laboring to formulate a metaphysical theology the mere terms of which would have been unintelligible to the first disciples. And he goes on to say that why such a Sermon stands in the forefront of the teaching of Jesus and such a Creed in the forefront of fourth-century Christianity—or how the centre of gravity was changed from conduct to belief—is a problem which claims investigation.

The beginnings of Christian theology appear in the New Testament where reflection upon the person and ministry of Jesus issues in the three different interpretations of Paul, the Writer to the Hebrews and the fourth Evangelist. These speculations were not at once followed up, for in its early day Christianity gained its adherents largely from the uneducated people of the lower classes; but when it reached a higher stratum of society, made its appeal to thought as well as to life and began to take a place in the intellectual world, then under Hellenic influence the

tendency appeared to make it into a Philosophy for the cultivated, as under influence mainly Asiatic it was made into a Mystery for the vulgar; and soon there were signs of danger that the Christian religion would evaporate into metaphysic or theosophy. It was to meet this danger that the Church fell back upon the theory, invented by Irenæus, that a uniform doctrinal tradition had always existed in the apostolic churches which must be deferred as a decisive authority in matters of faith. Of this supposed doctrinal agreement,—which was afterward defined in the formula of Vincentius, “*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*,”—it is enough to say that there never was any such thing. Up to the middle of the second century an unrestrained freedom of speculation had produced various incipient theologies; there was no definitive authoritative statement of Christian truth. It was in opposition to what may be loosely called the Gnostic movement, and in particular to the teachings of Marcion, that about the year 150 such a statement took shape at Rome. At an early day the simple faith in Jesus the Messiah had expanded into an assertion of belief in God the Father, in Jesus Christ His Son, and in the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of the godly. This belief, which went everywhere with Christianity, undoubtedly came down from Paul and other missionaries to the Gentiles; its three articles were accepted in a general sense as postulates of the new religion, but they remained unformulated and undeveloped. Now,—amplified by brief statements touching the birth and death of Jesus, his resurrection and second coming, and by mention of certain gifts of divine grace,—they were crystallised out of their primitive fluidity into a uniform Rule of Faith. Reducing them to a fixed formula, gathering them into a creed, clothing that creed with dogmatic authority and exacting the confession of it from candidates for baptism

—this was the action attributed the Apostles, but which in fact was taken now for the first time. In the second century the fiction that all church institutions were based upon apostolic authority, passed for an unquestionable fact: the bishops were successors of the Apostles in a line of direct descent; the New Testament Canon was a collection of writings of apostolic authorship; and the articles of faith as they appeared in the Roman baptismal formula had been handed down to the churches from the Apostles themselves. This Roman creed was termed a “symbol,” or password, and its acknowledgment was required of those to be admitted to membership in the Church as a guaranty of good faith on their part, and as a barrier against the intrusion of those holding tenets of the Gnostic sects. It was put forth as an authentic summary of the apostolic teaching. Such teaching, however, had been that of many different persons, and this fact allowed of tracing doctrines to one Apostle or another; thus Marcion built on Paul, Basilides on a special revelation to Matthias, and so on. It was therefore found necessary to assume an apostolic consensus, on the ground that the Apostles were teachers not of their own ideas but of the doctrine they had received from Jesus Christ. This was to make the Twelve Disciples authorities for the faith, excluding all others, even the Apostle who was afterwards to be regarded as the founder of Christian theology. Paul was the more easily ignored, since, as appears from the later New Testament writings, his peculiar doctrines in the systematic form he gave to them had not met with general acceptance. Shaped in the heat of controversy, in part to serve as weapons of defence, they seem to have faded away with the crisis that gave them birth. Breathing the spirit of a rabbinical theology, alien and outlandish in the eyes of the Greco-Roman world, they had little influence on the Catholic Church

until canonisation bestowed upon the Pauline Letters the authority of Sacred Scripture. It is the saying of Harnack that in the second century but one Christian, Marcion, took the trouble to understand St. Paul, and he misunderstood him; and Professor Moore remarks: "It has been doubted whether Paulinism, that extraordinary adjustment of Paul's new revelation to his Judaism, ever fully commanded any mind save that of the author of the system."<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic Church had its own ideal picture of the early Christian history, and one that bore little likeness to the reality. Though in fact the Twelve Disciples took no part in the establishment of the Gentile churches, the later editors of the Synoptics represent Jesus as entrusting them with the commission to teach all nations and to preach the Gospel in all the world. Thus the deposit of faith is held to have been given by the Christ himself into the hands of his Apostles and by them to their successors. The Twelve are thought of as a sacred college responsible for the conservation of Christian truth, and the unanimity of this college of Apostles guarantees their transmission of an unchanging faith from which dissent is not to be allowed. From the first this is the view insisted on. To Irenæus it is beyond doubt that the main articles of the baptismal symbol express the truth which the apostolic churches have always held and in which all believers are bound to agree; and the fiery Tertullian would have Christians hold no intercourse with those who will not acknowledge the Rule of Faith. From this time adherence to a statement of belief becomes the sign and seal of those who belong to the Catholic Church, and it is this which distinguishes them from those who do not. Not only was the Creed accepted as apostolic in its substance, but in time even its wording came to be ascribed

<sup>1</sup> Moore. *The New Testament in the Christian Church*, 268.



to the Apostles. In the legend of its authorship, which may be traced to the time of Ambrose, and perhaps of Origen, the Creed is divided into twelve articles; one of these articles is said to have been contributed by each of the Apostles in a session held soon after the day of Pentecost, and from them the Creed has descended to the Church through the continuous succession of the Episcopate. Hence an authority was ascribed to it even higher than that of the canonical writings of individual Apostles, and the halo of glory with which the legend encircled it remained undimmed till the day of Erasmus.

This early symbol held its place in Rome for upwards of three centuries when it was supplanted by the Creed known as the Nicene, and fell into disuse. At this time, under Odovakar and the Ostrogoths, Arianism was spreading in the West, and to arrest its progress the Roman Church decided to accept the Eastern Creed, which was crowned with the prestige of authorisation by two ecumenical Councils, so as to express in its baptismal confession its disavowal of the heresy. Meantime the old Roman Creed had made its way into the Western provinces towards the end of the second century, and there undergone certain modifications. Its practical tone made it more germane to the Roman temper than a Creed which registered the issues of speculative disputation, and when in the eighth century the Church of Rome was gaining a high sense of its own importance, and a growing alienation was declaring itself between the East and the West, the original Creed returned to Rome from Southern Gaul with some few additions and slight changes in wording and with the title it has since retained of the Apostles' Creed. The so-called Nicene Creed is touched upon in a later section; here it is enough to say that in all that materially distinguishes it from the Apostles' Creed it only survives as the relic of ancient

controversy that once burned fiercely, whose ashes have long been cold. It is the Creed of the Greek and Oriental churches, in which the Apostles' Creed is unknown; it stands high in the regard of Anglican theologians and retains a place in the Anglican liturgy, yet its subtleties are caviare to the general, and we may venture to say that in its somewhat perfunctory recitation few if any trouble to give thought to it. The Creed that has held the first place in Western Christendom and won the widest acceptance from the laity is the Gallo-Roman symbol that we call the Apostles' Creed.

When we turn to examine this statement of the Christian faith the first thing that strikes us is the number and importance of the matters that receive no mention.<sup>1</sup> We do not find the Church of Jesus Christ expressing its firm belief in the great ideas and principles which possessed the mind of the Master and so potently have influenced the world. The deep truths of a spiritual religion which his Gospel reveals to the hearts of men have no place among the articles of the Catholic faith. His thoughts and words and deeds, his life and character—the vital seed of historic Christianity—all are ignored as pertaining to the negligible episode of his mere humanity, and the Creed passes with one step from his birth to his death. And the things of which the Creed speaks may well seem as surprising as its silence concerning the things it might be expected to assert, for they are things foreign to the mind of him who is called the Founder of Christianity, and without perceptible relation to the religion he taught by word and life.<sup>2</sup> The first article,

<sup>1</sup> "No one conversant with the history of early Christianity can look closely at the Apostles' Creed without a sense of wonder both at the things it chooses out for enumeration and as well at the things which it omits to state." Moore, *op. cit.*, 296.

<sup>2</sup> On this point see the clear and cogent statements of Schmidt, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, 293-294. Pfeleiderer has shown how the Christological

for instance, names the Father, yet the God of Catholicism is not the God of Jesus. Doubtless he too believed that God made heaven and earth, but that was not his message to men. This Father Almighty is not the Father of whom Jesus tells, with whom His human children live in filial communion, trustfully dependent on His loving care; it is the Father of the "Only Son," a God imaged after the dualistic conception that ruled all philosophical thought, throned in the solitude of infinite majesty and withdrawn from the hearts of men.

Now if we ask how it is that the Creed is only concerned with theological propositions (for its so-called "facts" are facts only for theology)<sup>1</sup> and leaves out of view the truths that bear upon the moral and religious life—those that held chief place in the faith of earlier Christians, the

---

articles of the Creed derive from the mythical ideas of the old religions, as we have seen above in the case of the Descent into Hell, and he finds in them a response to the longings that possessed the souls of men. "The demand for a god who should bring alike salvation to the individual in the world to come and a new social order of justice, prosperity, and peace was already present in the yearning of the nations; whence should come assurance of its realisation? The answer was given in Catholic Christianity which united the Messianic King of an earthly Kingdom of God with the conqueror of death and giver of immortal life in the one person of the Son of God who became man, died, descended into hell, rose victoriously from the dead, and ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God and will come again to judge the living and the dead. All these articles of belief are to be found in the religious cults of the ancient world in East and West, in the manifold forms of Jewish Apocalypse, of Oriental mysticism and gnosis, of Greek speculation and Roman Cæsar-worship. There was wanting only the single subject for the synthesis of these predicates, the nucleus round which this seething mass of religious ideas could crystallise into a new faith and hope. This centre of unity was given in the person of Jesus, the Saviour and King of the Jews, who by his cross has become Saviour and King of the World." *The Early Christian Conception of Christ*, 150.

<sup>1</sup> Pfleiderer considers that the term theological is not properly applicable to the Creed: "The mythology fixed by the articles of faith in the belief of the Christian Church nullified all theological effort; to reconcile them with reason was not possible and never will be."

answer is that these were not a subject of controversy with Greek or Jew, nor did they give rise to any serious difference of opinion within the Church. It was over the personality of Jesus Christ that animated discussion arose, and when the latent Docetism of the Pauline Christology came into the open and was carried to a dangerous extreme, the Church was compelled to define its position in relation to the questions in dispute. Thus the Rule of Faith was shaped by the exigencies of special circumstances. In any event some such formulation of doctrine was to be expected, but apart from Marcionites and other Gnostics it would hardly have taken just the turn it did take, nor have been couched in the terms that have come down to us. "Tertullian's contention is that the Rule is not only apostolic and binding, but also adequate—a complete representation of apostolic teaching—that there were no necessary truths outside it."<sup>1</sup> Yet the truths outside it are those of real moment to religion. It seems plain that a declaration touching points whereon men differ, which ignores a larger number of points of greater consequence wherein all agree, cannot be regarded as an adequate statement of their faith; and when such a declaration assumes a controlling prominence as if it were the whole, or the vitally important part, of religious truth, and the bond of union of those who would make religion the motive power of their life—then it misleads men's minds. All appears in a false chiaroscuro; in the light concentrated on the things of which the Creed speaks the things as to which it is silent fall into shadow and are lost to sight.

And if a fragmentary Creed restricts us to a partial view of truth, the fixity of a Creed as a Rule of Faith hampers and checks the growth of the religious mind. In view of this consequence the superstitious reverence

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *Hibbert Lectures*, 318.

for the Catholic Creeds which the churches inculcate is something to be deprecated. The assertion that the Creed in the form it gradually assumed in the West, or as it was adopted by the Council of Chalcedon, is the final statement of Christian truth, never to be taken from or added to, involves the singular assumption that an active theological development may be allowed to go on for some centuries and then it is to be suddenly and forever arrested. Freedom of opinion, the utterance of divergent views, is legitimate and salutary up to a certain point, and then all venturing to think for oneself becomes an unpardonable sin. It is an accepted dictum that "fixity of interpretation is of the essence of the Creeds"; it seems evident that on the contrary flexibility of interpretation is essential to the maintenance of these ancient documents in modern use. We cannot, if we would, think with the mind of the second or the fourth century; we live in a different world. The Creed of a living Church must be a living Creed, and to live is to grow. The Creeds, like the thirty-nine Articles of the English Church, are each the product of a particular time and register the dominant conceptions of that time. Like the English Articles they have historic value as witnessing to questions and controversies of the past, but in so far as they originate in temporary conditions they have no claim to be binding for all time. This claim, however, has been asserted and enforced, and the Christian faith, tied down to formulas which have a definite historical explanation, has naturally failed to keep pace with the general progress of knowledge and lost touch with the spirit of the age. The theory underlying the claim which represents that faith as a sacred deposit "once for all delivered" and to be preserved intact—like the buried talent of the parable—finds no support in the facts given in the history of the creed-making ages. Rather we find in the Creeds a



summary of the results of long continued speculation and discussion. Their conclusions then, like the conclusions of natural science, were in the nature of the case provisional: it is an odd mistake to suppose that the unchangeableness of truth attaches to men's apprehensions and definitions of truth. If religious thought involves the necessity of adjusting religious ideas to all the other ideas a generation has come to possess, so that its religious consciousness shall be brought into harmony with the other organs of its mental life, then movement, change, development belong to the very conception of religious thought, as of all living things. Arrest of such movement is death, and dogma is dead thought, embalmed in the decrees of ecclesiastical authorities, and made binding upon all, not because its truth is self evident, but because the authority has said it shall be binding. Yet after all no human power can stay the advance of the intelligence in the matter of religious faith more than in other matters, and experience proves that insistence on obsolete doctrine only works disaster to religion. If spiritual truths come to men cast in the mold of antiquated forms—forms suited to the genius of an earlier age and therefore unsuited to our own—it is to be feared they will not trouble to extract the kernel from the husk, the eternal from the temporal, but will throw away the one with the other: and hence those liberal Christians are the true conservatives who seek so to simplify and modernise the historic faith as to save religion for the coming generations.

What is of chief moment, however, and most deserves attention is not the Creed itself, but what it represents, the whole general movement which is indicated and illustrated by the formation of a Creed, a movement from which the Creed springs and to which it lends acceleration. It was the ossification of religion into the-

ology, following the torpor that was creeping over the faith of early Christianity. When Christendom began to occupy itself persistently with things at once inscrutable and inessential, to the neglect of matters on which Jesus himself laid the chief stress, it resulted that God was displaced by the idea of God, the Being to be loved and trusted by a conception of Him that must be accurately defined. The drawing up of a Creed and the paramount importance assigned to it mark the time when the meaning of the word faith was transformed from simple trust in God into acceptance of a series of metaphysical propositions. In the Pauline teaching the word faith has indeed a peculiar sense, but it is always faith in Christ; it is a personal union, not the holding of correct Christological conceptions. Now, however, it was not enough that faith should be the inspiration of a life, but the idea of God must be analysed and stated with minute exactness,—as if it were maintained that taking food is not sufficient for one's bodily nourishment unless he can pass an examination in physiology, or rather as if to pass the examination were the only thing necessary to physical life. With this came a further change, and faith began to signify not so much believing as what one believes; that is, it was not faith but "the faith" that was insisted on. Time had been when men were Christians because their hearts were touched and kindled by devotion to a person, and the spirit of his life laid hold of them and drew them to follow in his steps; but when the warmth of this enthusiasm waned and the spiritual impulse from the influence of Jesus gradually spent itself, the way was open for the rise of intellectualism and the transfer of interest from righteousness to orthodoxy. And that the one came to take the other's place has stamped itself on language; miscreant is still a term of intense moral reprobation, and yet it only means wrong believer. It is the

Apostle's remark that "the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom," and it shows an accurate perception of racial characteristics. With the Greeks to know was everything, or the only thing worth while. Christianity attracted Hellenic converts because it appeared to them in the light of a new philosophy, and this intellectual interpretation, this character of a revealed body of truth, was fastened upon Christianity at a very early day. For the new religion found itself in a world where metaphysical conceptions pervaded the whole mental atmosphere and were exercising a like general influence to that of scientific conceptions in our day. It was a decadent age of thought. The sun of Greek philosophy was sinking from its splendid noonday to its setting in the cloud-land of Neo-Platonism. Original thinkers were succeeded by commentators or literateurs; the great schools had broken into wrangling sects; pedants disputed less over principles than over the forms of their expression, and the quest of truth degenerated to a war of words. Yet in coming down from the heights philosophy came down to the level of the average intelligence. In its literary aspect some acquaintance with it entered into a general education. What it lost in depth of significance it gained in a wider hearing, and its very weakness served to give it vogue, until the popular mind became saturated with its ideas and dominated by its methods.

It was under such conditions that Christian theology took rise. When Christianity was assailed as a barbarous atheism, the defence of the faith naturally devolved upon men trained in Hellenic culture who could present Christian truths in a manner agreeable to the philosophical cast of mind prevalent in the educated world. It was not so much that Christianity adopted current philosophical doctrines as that it imbibed the philosophising spirit and took the bias toward intellectualism of that acute

Hellenic genius which "found so much greater pleasure in thinking cleverly than in being good."<sup>1</sup> "What Greek philosophy did was to contribute to the building up of dogma, of that system of thought which seeks to rationalise, or to explain the ultimate fact of the divine nature—the ground of the evangelical idea set forth by Jesus; which, just because it is an ultimate fact, admits of no explanation, but only of being verified, and that not by philosophical speculation but by the personal experience of those who surrender themselves to the influence of the idea."<sup>2</sup> The Apologists, admitting philosophy to have been a Gentile revelation, undertook to show that Christianity was the only true philosophy, and Justin claims all true philosophers for Christians. Philosophy, it was believed, held the sum of knowledge, and by this path was the approach to Christianity; and since men can only reason with the conceptions and the categories they possess, the philosophers turned Christian who began to systematise the content of their new religion brought to its statement in terms of thought the primary conceptions, the method and the terminology which had been developed in the course of Greek speculation, and these formed the mold in which Christian theology was cast.<sup>3</sup> Under the conditions of the time Christianity could not resist nor escape the intellectual influence that shaped its course. The Greeks long devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, highly trained in habits of reasoning, could but conceive the Christian revelation after the manner natural to the working of their minds, and endeavor

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *op. cit.*, 287.

<sup>2</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 204.

<sup>3</sup> "Greece provided Christianity with the weapons of culture which enabled it to subdue the minds of its opponents, but at the same time it did much to determine the main bias and direction of the religious consciousness which was established by its means; it gave its own form to the life and doctrine of the Church." E. Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, ii, 369.

to adjust it to their philosophical scheme of truth according to the established forms of thought and methods of procedure. The endeavor was but too successful. The Greek insistence upon knowledge as the chief concern of man took hold of the Christian mind, and it was not long before the Church came to share the Greek conviction that knowledge of truth was the way of salvation. St. Paul's preaching had claimed authority on grounds not recognised by philosophy. It was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, for the wisdom of the world, he declared, was foolishness with God; yet within a century and a half this wisdom had so taken possession of Christianity that Tertullian could argue for its toleration on the ground that it too was a philosophy like another, and a school for the study of philosophic Christianity was established at Alexandria under the teaching of Clement and Origen. With them Christianity is the culmination of philosophy and includes all truth; philosophy is the preparatory study. It is their assertion that no one could be truly pious who did not philosophise, and that the unlearned could not have knowledge of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The issue of the Gnostic controversy is supposed to be a triumph for Christianity, and such it may appear if we look only to the repudiation of the peculiar vagaries of an extravagant transcendentalism. But there was more than this at stake; the question was one of essential principles. The Church confronted a deliberate attempt to transform the faith into a gnosis.<sup>2</sup> This transformation was the real peril that threatened Christianity, not the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, 110-113.

<sup>2</sup> "The Gnostics were the archetypes of heresy, because they were the first who in attempting to rationalise Christianity endangered its foundations, transferring it from the domain of feeling to that of speculation, and substituting intellectual mysticism for its simple requirements of faith and moral purity." Mackay, *The Rise and Progress of Christianity*, 129.



kind of gnosis it was to become. Yet instead of contending for the *faith*,—for Christianity as a way of life and not a system of thought,—instead of meeting the enemy on this battle ground of principle, the Christian leaders abandoned the principle and concentrated their attack upon a minor issue, the falsity of Gnostic theology. They fought Gnosticism with its own weapons. They formulated a body of doctrine in opposition to the doctrine of the Gnostics, and when they succeeded in imposing this upon the churches heretical Gnosticism had indeed been overthrown, but an orthodox Gnosticism had gained supreme authority unshaken down to our own day.<sup>1</sup> Clement and Origen recognised two classes of Christians, those who lived by simple faith and those who reached a further perfection, the true knowers (γνώστικοι). It was a division on the ground of intellectual attainment answering to that which introduced the twofold morality of a later day. When it became the accepted view that faith was something rudimentary and imperfect until developed into gnosis, the conquered was conqueror and the Gnostic principle was established that Christianity is essentially philosophy. Such a Christianity is something different from the Gospel of Jesus. That is a message not to the intellect, but to the heart and conscience of mankind. It brings to us ideals rather than ideas, and its teachings are as easily apprehensible as they are searching and profound. And so while a philosophy of religion may have its pertinence and value, a philosophy of the Gospel—or what has been called “an explicit formulation

<sup>1</sup> “The Gnostic speculations were rejected, and the ecclesiastical thereby the more securely established. But are the latter a great deal better or more intelligent?” Wernle, *op. cit.*, 219.

A Christian Gnosticism, an adoption of Gnostic ideas, appears plainly in the deutero-Pauline writings and to some extent in the fourth gospel. A full treatment of this subject may be found in Pfeiderer's *Primitive Christianity*, vol. iii.

of the rational system already implicit in the intuition of Jesus"—seems at once superfluous and incongruous.

When the Christian religion became a system of theology it followed that its adherents were bound to subscribe to that system. At first the realm of Christian truth was open to the freest speculation, but it was not long before authority turned doctrine into dogma, a change of which the results have always been disastrous. Theological doctrine is the product of theorising about the nature of God, grace and free will, the plan of salvation, and other such topics, under the controlling influence of the ideas and modes of thought prevalent at a given time. When such thinking is left free to take its course it will keep pace with the progressive movement of general culture, and the development of doctrine will be in accordance with the increasing knowledge, the wider outlook and clearer insight that the years bring to the minds of men. It is obvious that the necessary condition of the progress of doctrine is freedom of thought, and when that is put under restraint and the fluid doctrine is crystallised into authoritative dogma, theology is brought to a standstill and left behind on the line of march; its doctrines, in harmony with the spirit of the times of their formation, lose hold of later generations, and then religion, which has been tied to the obsolete theology, will be neglected or rejected until it shall shake off the burden of that connection.

Yet such a system of authoritative dogma was the inevitable issue of the movement to intellectualise the Christian religion which took rise within the Catholic Church. First there was an effort at precise definition of the conceptions underlying the faith; then these, and the logical deductions from them, must be gathered into a system; and finally this body of doctrine must be invested with the authority of divine truth. For as the speculative

interest became supreme the distinction disappeared between the traditional primary beliefs and the newer doctrines concerning them, and it came to be as important to hold the one as the other. And when the doctrine of the incarnate Logos had gained prevalence, Neo-Platonic speculation found entrance into the Creed itself, and as Harnack says, "the baptismal confession became a compendium of scientific dogmatics." The Letter of the Eastern bishops to Paul of Samosata purports to set forth "the faith which we received from the beginning, having been transmitted to the Catholic Church and proclaimed up to our day by the successors of the blessed Apostles who were eye-witnesses and assistants of the Logos." And what they proceed to define as this faith is nothing other than the contemporary metaphysical theology.<sup>1</sup> Thus at last the essentials of Christian faith were fixed in expressions of opinion regarding matters so remote as to be out of all relation to the Christian life, and then that which should have bound all Christians together became a breeder of division and discord.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "It would be interesting to point out how the formulation of belief, when pushed beyond the range of man's inner experience, becomes unreal and hence tends to evoke formalism complemented by superstition. Christianity has been affected by two kinds of superstition which present analogies and are not unrelated in source. The one regards the magic-mystical effect of the outward act—eating of bread, or baptism, or penance done—a superstition opposed to the spiritual regeneration set forth by Christ. The other attaches a quasi-magical efficiency to the mind's accurate acceptance of metaphysical propositions. Equally with the first error it ignores the actual condition and the needful regeneration of the soul." Taylor, *op. cit.*, 120.

<sup>2</sup> "Had no more ever been imposed than what Christ imposed—the Kingdom, the Way, the Life; had faith in the living Christ not been confounded with assent to Christological speculations, the whole world might have been Christian by this time. But let hell be the penalty for theological error, let men's natural intolerance receive a divine consecration and blessing, and the result can only be what it has been—hatred, persecution, division, and subdivision." G. Tyrrell, *Medievalism*, 118.

For the orthodox theology took form under pressure of that principle of authority which was constitutive of the ecclesiastical system. There was ground for alarm in the philosophical activity so widely prevalent, when many men of many minds were giving utterance to the most discordant theories, and it was felt that measures must be taken to check independent speculation and subordinate it to a general control. It had always been agreed that the traditional apostolic doctrine required a traditional interpretation, and now the principle of this denial of private interpretation was extended to the new theology. That field could no longer be left open to irresponsible theorising; the Christian faith must be determined by authority. This authority was vested in meetings of bishops where points of doctrine were debated and the opinion that gained a majority vote was held to be finally decisive. We must not lose sight of these two facts, that the orthodox doctrines are nothing other than the speculative theories of certain men, and that their sole claim to our acquiescence comes from having the endorsement of a majority of a meeting.

All such speculations are simply personal convictions. The belief that metaphysical theology is more than this is the chief bequest of Greece to religious thought, and it has been a *damnosa hereditas*. It has given to later Christianity that part of it which is doomed to perish, and yet while it lives holds the key of the prison-house of many souls.<sup>1</sup>

Again, that the majority shall decide is a practical rule for the conduct of political affairs, but it seems absurdly inapplicable to the ascertainment of spiritual truth or the guidance of religious thought. It is the average man that constitutes any majority, and in things belonging

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *Hibbert Lectures*, 138.

to the higher reaches of mind the view of the average man is not very clear nor his insight profound—else he would not be the average man. It is rather the exceptional man, the genius, the seer, to whom we look, if to any human helper, for light and leading on the steep path to truth which our own feet must tread—our own feet, for truth, like righteousness, must be won by ourselves and is not to be received from the hands of another.

The bishops, however, proceeded without hesitation. The approved opinions were stamped as a body of truth, and as faith in its original sense had been required of the first converts, so in its new sense it was imposed as an obligation upon all, and the demand for assent to the prevailing opinion grew more and more stringent. Hence those who clung to the opinion of the minority became heretics and schismatics, to be excluded from the Church. It often happened that the condemned doctrine had formally been that of a majority, for when primitive views were becoming antiquated that was pronounced heresy which in the unsettled condition of belief, before orthodoxy was clearly defined, had been the prevalent opinion. Such opinions were not willingly surrendered, and the controversies ensuing were bitter and violent. There was a free exchange of anathemas, and for generations the air was sulphurous with volanic outbursts of the *odium theologicum*. Dr. Hatch tells us that he must refrain from quoting “the torrents of abuse which one saint poured upon another because one assented to the speculations of a majority and the other had speculations of his own.” Theological uniformity, if everywhere spontaneously arising, might or might not be regarded as a blessed thing; but brought about by coercion, by silencing differences under pains and penalties, it has manifestly no significance or value. It was the misfortune of the early Church to lose sight of an essential distinction:



religion is no more a philosophy than art is a science.<sup>1</sup> Philosophy has indeed a great sphere of its own; the speculative dialectic deals not with abstractions but brings us to the knowledge of Reality. Yet its field is limited; it is strictly the activity of the intellect. Novalis declared: "Philosophy can bake no bread, but she can give us God, Freedom, and Immortality." It seems a scarcely accurate statement. Philosophy can give us the knowledge of God, the idea of Freedom, the conviction of Immortality; not those realities themselves. It is religion that brings us to God Himself, in the religious life is the realisation of Freedom, and immortality belonging to the spirit which we are is the gift of the Spirit whose we are, and not of Philosophy. Theology has been called the piety of the intellect, but that is not all of piety. Religion is the life of the whole man, and its deeper roots are in the affections and the will. To make it the affair of the intellect alone is not merely to confine it to its narrowest channel—to reduce it to its lowest terms, but to change its essential nature. And it was not merely that the Christian religion was changed from a principle of life into a metaphysical creed: it makes the matter worse that the creators of Christian theology were not original thinkers and could only adopt and adapt to their uses a decadent and defective philosophy, the incoherent Greco-Oriental eclecticism current in their day; and hence the attempt of Origen to construct a systematic philosophy of Christianity issued in a jumble of inconsistencies based

<sup>1</sup> "There is a fulness and concreteness in the immediate religious consciousness which defies all attempt at embodiment in abstract propositions. It is fatal to identify religion and theology, for such an identification will destroy the warm and breathing intensity of faith, substituting a creed for a life. Religion and theology have each their own form and their own law, and nothing but confusion can result from fusing together things so disparate in their nature." Watson, *The Philosophical Basis of Religion*, 15.

upon incompatible data which it would seem neither a philosopher nor a Christian could find acceptable. To this it came: the life of faith, of trust in God and loyalty to Christ, was displaced by intellectual acceptance of a system of philosophic doctrine bearing the name of Christian, but in spirit and in method and largely in substance borrowed from the heathen; and upon this acceptance salvation depended. Not the practice of virtue but the profession of the faith was the essential thing, for sin was pardonable, but not error. This metamorphosis of a religion which claimed Jesus for its founder is the one great triumphant Christian heresy, none the less a heresy though it arrogates to itself the name of orthodoxy and brands as heretical any departure from the standards it has itself set up and pronounced authoritative.

The spirit of the Gospel speaks in the words an Evangelist puts into the mouth of Jesus: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another"; but with the enforcement of a uniform belief as the condition of Church membership, agreement in opinion became the bond of Christian unity, as it was in the philosophical schools. In earlier times a welcome was extended to all traveling brethren of good character; now the moral was superseded by a credal test. A circular letter issued by a church to its members on the eve of a journey furnished them with a certificate of orthodoxy which served as a passport to hospitality,—except where owing to differences on points of doctrine still unsettled, the churches would not receive each other's letters. An early writer could declare exultantly that faith was the victory that overcame the world, but faith in its new acceptance gave to the world the victory. Christianity had aimed to leaven the world with the spirit of a new life, and had itself become permeated by the spirit of the world. The world was changed perhaps, but Christianity

was changed as well. When intellectual assent rather than moral earnestness was taken to be the basis of religious society, the net of the Church was cast into the sea and gathered every kind. "Its members were of the world, basing their conduct on the current maxims of society, held together by the loose bond of a common name and of a creed they did not understand."<sup>1</sup> And when that Creed was made the answer to the question, What is Christianity? an astute hierarchy sucked thereout no small advantage. It was not by preaching the love of God and the love of man, but by the enforcing of credal conformity that it built up its power, and history has no darker page than that which records the fierce persecution of dissident belief from the day of the Albigenses to that of the Huguenots.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. *The Canon*

Along with the formulation of the Creed, and the outcome of similar ecclesiastical necessities, went the slow process of establishing a Canon of Christian Scripture. Up to the middle of the second century the writings comprised in our New Testament were looked upon as part of a more or less fugitive literature, the natural product of a religious movement. Their incidental and occasional character is marked, with scarcely an exception, upon the face of the writings themselves. The Letters of Paul contain the teaching, the counsel, the exhortation which he was not able to deliver in person, and it is likely if he could have been everywhere present we should have had no Letters at all. They are concerned with the

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *Hibbert Lectures*, 349.

<sup>2</sup> If one would know something of the later crimes against humanity in the name of religion, he may learn it from that terrible indictment of the Gallican Church, Lanfrey's *L'Eglise et les Philosophes du 18me Siècle*.

actual situation in a given community, and had that been other than it was the Letters would be different from what they are. The Gospels are compilations of an oral tradition, and of Memoranda of that tradition, which conserved the personal testimony of apostolic men, and it is when these men are passing away that written gospels begin to appear. The earliest of them took shape from the tradition as it was current in different communities, and exhibits the variety of that tradition. The various regions of the Empire had their own gospels, the letters remained the property of the several churches to which they were addressed, and nowhere was there an attempt to make any collection of the scattered Christian literature, so much of which is lost to us. That literature was ranked, so to speak, on the same plane: each writing stood on its own merits, or was accepted because it was found acceptable. There was no distinction between the books afterwards stamped as canonical and others of the same sort—gospels, epistles, acts, revelations—and some of these latter were read in the public services in preference to some of the former. The author of the third gospel lays claim to no divine inspiration, but simply says that he like many others has thought it well to draw up a narrative of events reported by eye-witnesses, and to that end has traced the course of things accurately from the first. Of this and the fourth gospel Jülicher remarks: "If these writings had not come down to us as parts of the New Testament no one would be aware of any difference between them and other literary productions of those times."<sup>1</sup> To paraphrase from Professor Moore:<sup>2</sup> If we would understand the way in which the books of the New Testament appeared to men for a century after the death of Paul, we must divest ourselves altogether of

<sup>1</sup> Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 469.

<sup>2</sup> Moore, *The New Testament in the Christian Church*, 43-44.

the notion of a scriptural canon. We must realise that we have gone back to the time when men loved the oral testimony to the grace and truth of Jesus better than the written substitute; when there were many more collections of Jesus' sayings and narratives of his doings than our four gospels, and when some of these were in many places preferred to some of the four, and in other places not all of the four were known. It was a time when there were many more Letters of apostolic men than those we have in the New Testament, when the word apostle had not yet lost a sense which made the glorious company of the apostles far larger than that of the Twelve, for the name applied to any man who bore Christ's message to the world; a time when prophets still claimed inspiration of the Holy Ghost and spoke to the churches as Paul tells us they spoke in Corinth, and when one Apocalypse at least, much more Christian than our Revelation, was as much loved where men loved that kind of thing at all, so that where it was rejected our Apocalypse was rejected too.

The Canon then is a selection from this mass of early Christian literature invested with the character of "Scripture." Here it may be well to define. The term Scripture designates such writings as are believed to be "inspired"—that is, to be the fruit of a divine authorship concurrent with the human—and therefore claim the highest authority and command the highest reverence. The term Canon—originally a cane, or reed, for drawing a straight line—signifies a line of demarcation, and hence a rule, a standard. Applied to Scripture it means the rule which determines the selecting and collecting of the Sacred Books, and then the collection itself comes to be called the Canon, because canonical books are those which regulate the teaching of the Church. This idea of a Canon of inspired writings was taken over from Judaism. For generations the Rabbis had been debating as to the title of certain



books of Jewish literature to be classed with sacred Scripture, and the same question was discussed with equal interest by the Christian doctors, to whom it was one of greater difficulty since it was complicated by the general use of the Septuagint, which differed in many respects from the Hebrew original, and contained writings not embraced in the Hebrew Canon. As we have seen, the Church inherited the Jewish Scriptures—which Paul had declared to be the “Oracles of God”—and until after the middle of the second century they were the only Scriptures of the new religion. Justin maintains that they belong to the Christians, not to the Jews to whom Providence only entrusted them provisionally. Not less than the Jews the Christians revered “the Law and the Prophets” as divinely inspired, and their notion of inspiration was no less thorough-going. The words of Scripture are the words of God, not of men. Inspiration is not an enlightening and energising of the mind of the writer, but a suspension of his mental activity; the Spirit of God speaks by the mouth of the Prophet, or of David (the author of all the Psalms) and dictates their very words. This theory of plenary verbal inspiration is well expressed in the simile of Athenagoras (in the “*Supplicatio*”) who likens the sacred writer in his relation to the Holy Scripture to a flute in the hands of a flute-player.

It was toward the end of the second century that this way of regarding the ancient Hebrew literature came to be applied to books of Christian authorship and gave to them an equal sacredness and authority. In the earlier view of Justin (ca. 100–165) inspiration can only be claimed for writings that have the character of prophecy. While it is a principle of his apologetic that this character belongs to the whole of the Old Testament, as foreshadowing the revelation in the Christ, he knows of other prophetic books entitled to share its high prerogative, and three

of them he quotes by name: the Sibylline Oracles, the prophecy of a certain Hystaspes, which is cited by later Fathers, and the Apocalypse of John, the Apostle who received a special revelation concerning the millennial reign. This is the only one of the books afterwards pronounced canonical to which Justin accords the rank of "Scripture"; the prophetic inspiration did not attach to the writings of other Apostles. Justin tells us that in the weekly meetings of the Christians there were readings from the "memoirs" of the Apostles, as well as from the writings of the prophets, and this name, memoirs, which he gives to the gospels is significant: it marks their distinction from the miraculously inspired writings of the prophets in which neither memory nor any human faculty had part. And Justin further declares that these memoirs had no authority in themselves, but only such as they received from the ratification of Old Testament prophecy beforehand.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the opinion of that age. Papias, the contemporary of Justin, went so far as to decry all gospel writings in favor of the oral tradition transmitted by the Elders, and notwithstanding this extreme position Papias was still a high authority to the great churchman Irenæus. It was the Christian faith that from the first the Holy Spirit had been given to all disciples, and in what might be called the inspiration of the Apostles there was nothing exceptional; if greater in degree than that of other Christians, it was not different in kind. Thus in the Epistle to the Ephesians the Christian Prophets form equally with the Apostles the foundation of the spiritual temple. While from an early day, though not the earliest, the authority of the Twelve Apostles was fully recognised,

<sup>1</sup> Reuss, *History of the Canon of the New Testament*, 48-51. The author goes on (pp. 51-56) to show that the "memoirs" to which Justin refers were gospels now lost.

it was that of men appointed by the Lord himself and personally entrusted with the charge of the Gospel and the direction of the Christian community. They were organisers and administrators; no one thought of them as writers. When the so-called Second Epistle of Clement affirms that the claims of the Church are attested by the Books and the Apostles, this expression shows that the Apostles were not to be found in books. Up to about the year 165, Christianity had no sacred books of its own. It knew of no inspired Scriptures besides the ancient oracles of the Jews. For it was not a book-religion—not a religion of authority and law, but of inspiration and life. And yet the time had scarcely passed when the apostolic churches might have been celebrating the centenary of their foundation before signs of a coming change appeared in a growing reverence for the Apostles, and then for the writings which some of them, it was believed, had bequeathed to posterity. Distance lent enchantment to the view of the past: miracles, grown rare and only known by hearsay, shed lustre on the early day when they were frequent; amid the dissensions of the churches men looked back with regret to a time when, it was supposed, Christian love had kept the bond of peace inviolate, and the sad experience of actual imperfection painted an ideal picture of a primitive golden age. Theologians and leaders of the churches were moved with a new veneration for their illustrious predecessors, hallowed now with an aureole of legend and resplendent with the reflected glory of the Lord. Serapion voiced the general sentiment in the phrase: we accept the Apostles as we do the Lord.

Everything which had any significance in Christian circles in matters of teaching and life, of discipline or worship was now traced back to the Apostles; the word “apostolic” became

a synonym for "ecclesiastically correct," and whatever men wished to establish as truly Christian was represented in good faith as the rule or doctrine of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup>

Paul too came at last to his own when men had come far enough away from him to realise how great he was. The opposition he encountered from a considerable part of Christendom, where his memory and his preaching were pointedly ignored or openly attacked, was yielding to a general recognition of his eminence as the chief of Christian missionaries and, owing to the many Letters attributed to him, by far the most prolific of the early writers. The literature of the first Christian generation was given an exalted place when its admirers remarked the contrast between its lofty spirit and glowing intensity and the dull and colorless imitations of recent times. Now that the spiritual impulse which led to the early productivity had spent itself there came a disposition to defer to the authority of the product of the past. Such early writings as had been saved were sought out and carefully studied by individuals and churches, and the more since the Gnostics were using them in support of their doctrines and it was necessary to examine the foundation of their claims. Moreover a great number of books were now appearing ascribed to authors of the apostolic age, and this imposed the task of discriminating between the genuine and the pseudonymous. The framing of a Canon of Christian Scripture was part of a general movement of the time, and doubtless the Catholic Church would eventually have carried out the work if there had been no heretical teaching to contend against, but heresy gave impetus to its efforts. The anti-Jewish tendencies of Christianity still lived in the mind of a minority, and the prevalent exaggeration of the authority of the Old Testa-

<sup>1</sup> Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 474.

ment brought about a reaction on their part in which it was rejected altogether. This was not to reject the principle of authority, but rather, as in the Reformation time, to displace one authority by another. To those who discarded the Jewish Scriptures the need was evident of a body of Christian Scripture to which they could appeal in the discussion of questions wherein they differed from the prevalent theology, and thus it may be said that the heretics took the lead in the making of a Canon. It was Marcion the Gnostic who first undertook the collecting of apostolic writings viewed as authoritative documents. His collection comprised the gospel of Luke and ten of the Epistles ascribed to Paul, and these he edited with a freedom of treatment beyond even the lax usage of the age: omitting, altering, interpolating, in order to bring his authorities into accord with gnostic theories. From the gospel, for example, he eliminated not only all that could be taken to show a connection of Christianity with Judaism, but all that was inconsistent with the view of the human life of Jesus as a mere appearance,—a view which he claimed, not without ground, was that of Paul. In this procedure Marcion maintained, and he seems to have honestly believed it, that he was only clearing the documents from the glosses of the Judaisers and restoring them to their original purity. However the leaders of the churches might judge of its gnostic application, they were ready to accept the principle of Marcion, that the Apostles were the authoritative witnesses to the truth revealed in Christ and that their witness was to be found in their writings. With the rise of the idea of the Catholic Church, the embodiment of the principle of Authority, the conviction took possession of the minds of men that there was a body of apostolic writings, inspired and authoritative and specifically the Holy Scriptures of Christendom. Upon these the Church took its stand



against the speculative vagaries of the Gnostics and the fanaticism of personal inspiration as it appeared among the Montanists.

In later times it was the prevalent belief that, as in the case of the Creed, the Church had always had a New Testament Canon, handed down direct from the Apostles themselves. Such a fancy could only arise after the lapse of many centuries and at a time when the long history of the formation of the Canon, with all its uncertainties and vacillations, had been quite forgotten. Long before there was any thought of an authorised collection of inspired writings the custom of regular readings in meetings for Christian worship of books believed to be derived from Apostles or apostolic men was everywhere established. They were read not from deference to the authority of the writers, but simply because they were found to be edifying, yet to this custom thus naturally arising and with no ulterior purpose we may trace the origin of the New Testament Canon, since it tended to these results: a high and peculiar estimation of the books read in public worship, and an unconscious process of selection amongst the current literature of such works as ministered to spiritual needs and commended themselves to the religious consciousness. Naturally, however, the books thus sanctioned by public reading were different in the different communities. Some churches were not acquainted with writings in use elsewhere; some refused to accept books not known to them from the first, and others again received some of these, but allowed them only a secondary rank and would not admit them to public reading. Again, their use in the readings might have consecrated in the eyes of a community certain books which now appeared of doubtful authorship, while others, which in the view of leading theologians held a valid claim to apostolicity, had not been known soon

enough or widely enough to obtain general acceptance. Concerning a multitude of writings held in high regard by one or more of the various churches there was no consensus of opinion, and for long years they fluctuated between the status of sacred and of merely popular literature. Thus in the struggle with Gnosticism, just at the time when the need was felt of a settled rule to mark off from all others those inspired texts which were to have decisive authority in the ever-widening field of theological discussion, it was found to be a task of insuperable difficulty to draw up a list of inspired books which should satisfy all claims and command universal assent. While it was agreed that the writings of the Apostles were to be revered as Holy Scripture, and formed a class apart from all the other literature which had been circulating in Christendom and was in use for the edification of the faithful, there was no way of establishing a catalogue of the apostolic writings, or in the language of a later day—for it was at the end of the fourth century that the term Canon first came into use—to form a Canon of Christian Scripture.

That was a work, or a growth, of centuries, and strictly speaking it cannot be said that the closing of the Canon took place until the session of the Council of Trent, if even then. This will not seem so surprising when we find that the early Church never laid down any principles of definition to guide the making of a Canon. If we ask on what grounds the books of our New Testament and no others came finally to form the body of authoritative Scripture, it must be answered that there was little question of their intrinsic merits, and in the utter absence of critical methods and of the historic sense the appeal was simply to the tradition of ecclesiastical usage. An essential characteristic of the rising Catholicism was its reliance upon the authority of tradition in all matters

of belief and practice. While heretical teachings might be based upon the text of writings held in high repute, their opponents did not resort to exegetical arguments for their refutation, but simply inquired what had been transmitted from generation to generation by the mouth of the bishops. It was plain that private interpretation of Scriptures led to dangerous results; the only sure way to ascertain the true faith was to consult tradition as it had been preserved in the churches by the successors of the Apostles. This is the method strongly advocated by Irenæus and Tertullian. According to them the Spirit only comes to individuals in that they share the corporate life of the Church, for "where the Church is there is the Spirit of God." Hence the heads of the churches, as guardians of the tradition, are the authoritative expounders of the truth, and if the Apostles had written nothing, recourse could still be had to the tradition of the churches they founded as equally competent to determine questions of the faith. As all know, this principle of subordinating Scripture to ecclesiastical tradition was a chief point of attack by the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Naturally then, in the efforts to establish a scriptural Canon it was tradition that directed the choice of the sacred books, tradition which, it was assumed, rested on primordial guarantees, on testimonies of the first age—an assumption as unfounded as it was confident.

The practical question was, what writings are to be sanctioned for reading in the meetings for Christian worship? The first Christians might have answered, Those that breathe the spirit of Christ, and of that the Christian spirit in their own hearts would be the judge. The many gospel narratives in use among the churches of that early day were valued not for being apostolic, but for being gospels—because they "related the things concerning the Lord." "The fear that without careful

examination spurious writings might be smuggled in did not belong to those early times.”<sup>1</sup> Now the criterion had changed from one of inward quality to one of outward fact, or of supposed fact. If the readings in the public services were limited to works of the Apostles, then, it seemed, the religious training of the faithful would be safely assured, and so it became the point of chief importance to determine the apostolic authorship of books in use among the churches. This question of apostolicity itself had to be decided in the case of a given book, not by appreciation of its character as consonant with the claim, but wholly on external evidence. Apostolicity was the only ground of inspiration, and the only attestation of apostolicity was ecclesiastical recognition. The criterion tended to reverse itself: it was said that a book was read because it was apostolic, in fact it was held to be apostolic because it was read. Unfortunately when the churches were summoned to give their testimony as to what books they received for apostolic, this brought little help to a decision, for the only certain fact elicited was the wide diversity of usage.

The long history of the Canon is one of ever repeated and ever futile efforts to reach a definitive settlement of the question; for centuries we watch the pursuit of a flying goal. It is true that toward the end of the second century there came to be a general agreement as to the superiority of our four gospels and most of the so-called Pauline Epistles to other writings of their kind, but such an estimate did not confer canonicity upon these writings in the sense of exclusive authority.<sup>2</sup> Early in the third

<sup>1</sup> Jülicher, *op. cit.*, 482.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæus was convinced that there must be just four gospels because there are four winds and four quarters of the earth. To what extent this argument carried weight with his contemporaries we have no means of ascertaining.

century a gospel according to Peter was in use in Cilicia with the permission of Serapion, the bishop, and the only gospel of the Syrian churches until the middle of the fifth century was Tatian's Diatessaron (c. 175) a kind of "Life of Christ" drawn from the current gospels. It has been taken for granted that Tatian made use of our four gospels only, but of this we cannot be certain. The name Diatessaron does not settle the question, for that was a technical musical term for accord, or harmony, and might properly be given to a compilation of any number of writings. Evidently neither Tatian nor his readers regarded the text of the gospels as inspired; otherwise they could not have been treated with such freedom. Everywhere the question whether a given book should be taken for Scripture received different answers. In certain churches some books afterwards pronounced canonical were rejected; in other churches some were received that afterwards were excluded from the Canon. So with the theologians: Irenæus, while ignoring the Epistle to the Hebrews, those of James, Jude and II Peter, quotes as Scripture the Epistle of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas; and Clement of Alexandria claims inspiration for such writings as the Preaching of Peter, the Gospel of the Egyptians and the Traditions of Matthias.

An attempt to draw up a catalogue of scriptural books has come down to us in the famous Muratorian Fragment, so-called from its discoverer Muratori, a scholar of the eighteenth century. It is supposed to date from about 190, to be of African origin and to give the usage of that Province; although Jülicher remarks: "How far the unknown author sets forth his own ideas must remain uncertain." It contains our four gospels, Acts, thirteen Epistles of Paul, I and II John, Jude, the Apocalypse of John and that of Peter. It is difficult to discover any principle which governs this selection. The fourth gospel



is defended on the ground that its author was an eye-witness of the things he writes, as he asserts in his first Epistle, and a legendary account of the composition of the gospel is added in which Dr. Davidson (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Article Canon) finds this significance: "The story of its origin, with its apostolic and episcopal attestation, evinces a desire to establish the authenticity of a work which had not obtained universal acceptance at the time." The gospels of Mark and Luke are also counted among the Holy Scriptures—although their authors are neither apostolic nor eye-witnesses, but only collectors from unknown sources—on the assumption that their narratives are vouched for by Peter or Paul. It is not clear whether the Fragmentist, as he is called, takes Paul to have been an eye-witness to the life of Jesus, or whether in his case he gives up the point he lays such stress upon in the case of the other gospels, and accepts the apostolic inspiration as an equivalent to personal knowledge of events. The Epistles of Paul addressed to separate communities are said to be the common possession of the Church, not because of their inherent universality—because they are found to be of spiritual worth in the Christian experience, but because the symbolism of the perfect number declares them to be really addressed to the whole Church: "Paul, following the example of John, wrote to seven churches, thereby showing the unity of the Catholic Church, for it is known that there is but one single Church spread over the whole earth." "How surely would the author have added here the interesting fact that there are also seven Catholic epistles, if all the seven had been known to him."<sup>1</sup> The Apostle's letters to individuals must also be accepted as Scripture because in spite of their private character they deal with matters of ecclesiastical discipline. This external justification of

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *op. cit.*, 126.

the Pauline Epistles shows that the principle, whatever is apostolic is canonical, is not a matter of course with the Fragmentist. He would make it decisive, however, in the case of Hermas. His Apocalypse is to be commended as orthodox and edifying, but it is not to be read in public worship, for the writer has no place among the Prophets, whose membership had long been complete, nor among the Apostles, since he belonged to a later age. On the other hand the Epistles to Laodicea and Alexandria, circulating as Pauline, are to be rejected not because they are spurious but because they are heretical. So also many churches refused to receive the Apocalypse of Peter, dear to the Fragmentist, although it was not attacked as non-apostolic. In these cases it is the contents of the writing, not the person of the writer that sets the standard; and in this view the orthodox Hermas might claim a revisal of the judgment against him. A little later we find a dogmatic judgment taking the form of historical criticism. Bishop Serapion, becoming convinced that the gospel of Peter was heretical in sentiment, revoked his permission for its use on the ground that it was a forgery. That is, if the doctrine of a book did not agree with that of acknowledged apostolic writings it must be concluded that it was not apostolic. This criterion was based upon the assumed unanimity of the apostolic writers, in blindness to the essential differences in their theological views.

In the following century the attitude of the learned Origen (c. 185-234) toward the question shows that there was abundant room for the exercise of independent judgment in relation to a scriptural Canon. He is convinced of the inspiration of Hermas, quotes the Didache as Holy Scripture and supports the claims of Clement and Barnabas to be so accepted. The Acts of Paul and the Gospel of the Hebrews he is not prepared to rank with

acknowledged Scripture, but he attributes to them an authority scarcely inferior, while he refuses to recognise the Gospel of the Twelve and is unwilling to express a decided opinion concerning the Preaching of Peter. In the course of such discussions Origen is led to suggest a critical classification of the Christian literature which might serve as a rule for the Church, according to which all writings would be distributed under three categories, the genuine, the spurious, and the mixed—that is, those which in spite of their apocryphal character had elements of unquestionable value. From this distinction it appears that in the view of Origen the intrinsic worth of a writing—a matter for critical appreciation—had something to say in the determination of its canonicity. The deliverances of this eminent theologian regarding the Epistle to the Hebrews are especially significant of the freedom of opinion on the canonical question, which shows that it was one still open for discussion. On critical grounds he pronounces that the Epistle is not of Paul, and declares “God alone knows who wrote it,” but his admiration for a book so in line with his own allegorical treatment of the Old Testament leads him to suggest that the ideas are Pauline though the form of their expression is due to another, and hence “if any church holds it to be Paul’s it is not in error.” On the strength of this venturesome argument he would include in the Canon an Epistle of unknown authorship because he likes it, because it suits his taste. Evidently the rule of apostolicity has not at this time acquired binding force.

We come next to Eusebius (270–340) who more than any other devoted earnest labor to the question of the Canon. He cites an immense number of authors to note their lists of scriptural books and the judgments they pronounce on various writings that claimed a place among them. From his careful sifting of the individual testi-

monies, and his reference to the usage of particular communities as well, it is evident that the Canon was still all in the air; there was no official declaration, nor any common agreement of churches or bishops to be appealed to as a final authority. The method of our scholar is to count the votes of his witnesses and on this basis to divide all writings which claimed to be sacred into three classes: those received, those disputed, and those rejected. Thus the classification is not determined by any criticism of the teaching or tendency of a book, but solely by the usage of the churches and the opinions of ecclesiastical writers. We are chiefly concerned with the intermediate class, those whose claim to be Scripture, or "Covenant books" (ἐνδιαθήκη), was not universally allowed but which nevertheless were "consecrated to public use in most of the churches." The books given under this category are the five doubtful Catholic Epistles, the Apocalypse of John, the Gospel of Peter and that of the Hebrews, the Acts of Paul, the Epistles of Barnabas and of Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Peter and the Teaching of the Apostles. Eusebius however shows himself undecided as to this pronouncement. He has reckoned fourteen Epistles of Paul among the books universally received, thus including Hebrews, but he adds that several reject that Epistle on the ground that the Church of Rome maintains its non-Pauline authorship, and in another place he classes it with the controverted books. Among these Clement appears, but elsewhere he tells us that this "beautiful and admirable" Epistle is universally received by the churches. The Acts of Paul he admits is not undisputed but he places it in his second class with evident reluctance. So of the Gospel of the Hebrews he makes the vague remark that some place it among the contested books, but others use it from preference. On the other hand the Apocalypse

of Peter is ranked sometimes with the disputed books, sometimes—apparently under the influence of the Greeks' distaste for this style of literature—with those to be rejected. Even greater uncertainty attends his disposition of the Apocalypse of John. He appears strongly inclined to reject it, but decides to give it as a disputed book, with the comment that many hold it to be heretical while some include it among the received Scriptures. And then when giving his list of these latter he tells us: "To these must be added, if it be thought right, the Apocalypse of John"; we are left with the book in all three classes. The fact is, if Eusebius does not know what to do with it, that is owing to the clashing testimonies of successive periods. After enjoying exceptional distinction in the earlier time it had later on fallen into disesteem in the East, especially since Dionysius of Alexandria in the century preceding had raised grave doubts of its apostolicity. It appears that likes and dislikes had a good deal to do with judgments respecting canonicity. From its vagueness and obscurity Jewish Apocalyptic was distasteful to the logically trained Greek mind, and the desire to get rid of its inconvenient apostolicity sharpened the critical perception that the Apocalypse of "John" could not have come from the hand that wrote the fourth gospel. It is probable that but for the attitude of the Greeks the Apocalypse of Peter, which has a place in the Muratorian Canon, would have been received in the West. On the other hand we have just seen that Origen is led to regard Hebrews as constructively apostolic by the wish which is father to the thought, and it is instructive to find that the "inward witness" of the Spirit suggests to Calvin the same view of that Epistle to which Origen inclined from personal liking. The case of the Apocalypse is not the only one in which Eusebius finds himself embarrassed by the fluctuations of opinion. If he appears hesitating,



inconsistent, and confused, it is because the tradition respecting certain books was still wavering, and he was unable to fix it or attain to any decided results. One fact his discussion of the subject brings out plainly, and that is that the books which very many regarded as Scripture were much more numerous than those of our New Testament. To this the Uncials also bear their witness. The Sinaitic Codex of the fourth century includes in the New Testament the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, the Alexandrine of the fifth century has the first and second Epistles of Clement, and the Claromontane of the sixth, the Acts of Paul and the Apocalypse of Peter in addition to Barnabas and Hermas. The Vatican Codex being incomplete, we cannot tell what books now uncanonical it may have contained.

About the time of Eusebius' death was born one of the most famous doctors of the Latin Church who was led to an examination of the condition of the Canon in the course of his labors as translator of the Sacred books. Jerome (c. 340-420) gives us his views to this effect: Hebrews, he writes, is excluded from the Pauline Epistles by most churches, and he leaves us to make what we can of the further pronouncement that "all Greek authors attribute it to Paul, though most believe it to be by Barnabas or Clement." For himself he guesses it to be a translation by another hand of a Hebrew original, but he brings nothing to the support of this hypothesis. The Epistle of Jude, he says, is rejected by most; still, he maintains, it was very early reckoned among the Holy Scriptures. The authorship of II Peter is much disputed and, as he alleges, on linguistic grounds. We cannot admit that to be the motive, for it assumes a critical treatment of the Christian writings which did not exist, but it is one that allows him to defend the Epistle. If it differs in style from the first, it is because

the Apostle employed different secretaries; in that case we do not possess an apostolic scripture, but only the writing of another made freely according to general directions from the Bishop of Rome—as Jerome calls him—for he is thoroughly convinced that Peter was Bishop of Rome, for twenty-five years. Such an explanation adopts a principle which involves serious consequences for the whole New Testament, something which our author does not perceive, or regards with placid unconcern. The Epistle of James—whom he makes one of the Twelve—is considered, he tells us, to have been written by another in that Apostle's name; but in time, he adds, it gained authority. John, he says, wrote one single Epistle which is acknowledged by all; the two others he attributes to a presbyter John whose tomb might still be seen at Ephesus. As to the latter statement Reuss remarks: "I do not know a single ancient author who gave it out before Jerome." What appears certain is that second and third John were not accepted as apostolic by the early churches. In regard to the authorship of the Apocalypse Jerome seems to have adopted the position of Dionysius of Alexandria. As to other doubtful books he would like to obtain recognition for the gospel of the Hebrews, he urges that the Epistle of Clement is read in many churches, and he appends the Epistle of Barnabas to a canonical list.

If such uncertainties continued to perplex the most learned scholar of the day, it is plain that the fourth century found itself unable to finish the task which the second had left incomplete. And very significant of the carelessly uncritical treatment which the whole question received is Jerome's naïve suggestion that in the interest of comity the Greeks and Latins should adopt each other's *antilegomena*, or the books they respectively objected to. For the vexed question was further complicated by the divergent interests of thought and life. Theology favored

a rigorous selection which should exclude any writing of doubtful orthodoxy; ecclesiasticism welcomed everything it found useful in popular instruction and adapted to the needs of plain people not conversant with speculation. The one was unwilling to admit anything that could not show traditional evidence of divine origin, and the other unwilling to reject anything that was sanctified by usage. These opposite points of view were maintained respectively by the East and West. We find for instance a synod of Laodicea ruling out the Apocalypse, and one of Carthage including in its list the Acts of the Martyrs. The bishops of Asia were men of theory, their chief interest was in a Christian philosophy, and their ruling takes its place in the long series of dogmatic decisions pronounced by Eastern Councils. The African bishops were men of practice; they had regard to the regulation of worship and of teaching, and their decision belongs to the class of disciplinary statutes for which the West showed always a peculiar aptitude. Thus while men on the one hand deferred to the necessities of dogmatic theology, and on the other to the utilitarian interests of the Church, no common valuation of the sacred books could be agreed upon, and all efforts toward the forming of a Canon came to nothing. Concerning two books in particular there was an irreconcilable difference of opinion. The Apocalypse, repudiated by the Eastern churches, was widely venerated in the West, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, which the West refused to acknowledge, held a high place in the esteem of the East.

And now there entered on the scene a dominating personality deeply impressed with the need of putting an end to these uncertainties, and anxious above all for some settlement of the question. At first it was the attempt of Augustine (354-430) to reconcile the restriction imposed by doctrinal demands with the liberty claimed in the

interest of practical usage, and so he recommends the reading of the Canonical books of Scripture first of all, and then, when grounded in the faith, the Christian may go on to the other divine Scriptures which are not canonical.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the Canon was still an aim, a desideratum, not an accomplished fact, and the question naturally arises how is one to tell the Canonical Scriptures from the uncanonical? Augustine replies, he is to follow the lead of the churches: those books received by all will be preferred to those received only by some, and of these latter those will be preferred which are received by the greatest number and by the most considerable churches. Such a method of estimating the relative value of the sacred books might be looked for from the great ecclesiastic who declares: "I would not believe the Gospel if the Catholic Church did not guarantee its truth." It appears that according to Augustine the authority of the Scriptures is not inherent in the books themselves, but is attached to them—depends on the chance they have had of a wide circulation among the churches. Thus the quest of canonicity still remains one of figures and statistics, and as it was practically impossible to gather and to weigh the suffrages of all the churches in Christendom, no certain result was to be reached, and we find doctors and synods continually speaking of "canonical books" without knowing exactly what they were.<sup>2</sup> Meantime as the need of fixity was

<sup>1</sup> The position here taken that there are uncanonical books which yet are divine Scripture was soon found to be untenable, and the synod of Carthage under Augustine's direction expressly abandoned it.

<sup>2</sup> According to Dr. Davidson (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th Ed., vol. v, 12) "Augustine was unfitted for the task of settling the Canon. A tradition arbitrarily assumed dominated all his ideas of selection. His judgment was weak, his sagacity moderate, and his lack of learning hindered a critical result. Jerome, again, was learned but timid, lacking the courage to face the question fairly and fundamentally and the independence necessary to its right investigation."

increasingly felt, there appeared in the Latin Church a growing disposition to draw a sharp distinction between scriptural books and others which had been deemed profitable for edification. Gradually the term apocryphal, with the sense of spurious and dangerous, became the antithesis of canonical; writings the most innocent, once esteemed precious, were swept into the category of proscription and the faithful warned against them.

And now since all efforts to form a Canon by a Catholic consensus of opinion had patently failed, it only remained that the question should be settled once for all by the mailed hand of authority. In three African synods (393, 397, and 419), virtually under the control of Augustine, the Canon was the subject of long consideration, and the list finally set forth comprised the twenty-seven books of our New Testament together with the Acts of the Martyrs, thus including all of our New Testament books that were in dispute, but rejecting all other writings of the doubtful class, with a single exception. It was decided to submit this list to the consideration of the Church of Rome, but the Roman confirmation never came, because the Acts of the Martyrs was not read in the Italian churches, and perhaps for other reasons. This was the first formal attempt at legislation, and though the African councils possessed no authority beyond the province, yet through the powerful influence of Augustine this codification is the one that substantially came to prevail in the Western Church, where it is said to have obtained the sanction of a papal decree during the pontificate of Gelasius (492-496).<sup>1</sup> In the East, however, there was never any authoritative pronouncement in definition of the Canon—in some regions the New Testament numbered thirty-five books—and the question remained open

<sup>1</sup> Concerning this so-called decree see Reuss, *op. cit.*, 233-235.



for discussion until, in the intellectual stagnation that settled down upon the Greek Church during the ninth century, interest in the subject died out, and at length in 1672 a council of Jerusalem accepted the Western Canon with its twenty-seven books. It is too much to say that the fifth century saw the definitive closing of the Canon in the West.<sup>1</sup> In some MSS. of later date Hebrews is wanting, in others Hermas is added, or the Apostolic Constitutions; many have fifteen Epistles of Paul, that is, including one to the Laodiceans, which may indeed be found in editions of the New Testament after the invention of printing. The Claremontane Codex of the sixth century contains, as we have seen, four books other than our twenty-seven, and the Bobbiensine of the same age has a Liber Sacramentarium, or Mass-Book, placed after the four gospels. In fact throughout the Middle Ages no official decision of questions affecting the Canon was rendered by the Church, for since its dogmatic teaching was based less upon Scripture than upon ecclesiastical tradition, such questions had become of secondary interest, and if the Reformers had not thrust them forward into the arena of debate the indecision regarding them might have continued indefinitely.<sup>2</sup> And so we find the doctors of Trent proceeding to draw up a Canon of Holy Scripture, and considering four different proposals as to principle and method, as though they were dealing with a matter hitherto untouched. The final action of the Council, as all know, was to canonise the Latin Vul-

<sup>1</sup> "It would be a great mistake to represent the Canon as finally settled at this time in Western Christendom. . . . The written law is far from having extinguished the opposing rights of custom." Jülicher, *op. cit.*, 542.

<sup>2</sup> "The whole discussion died out, not because the matter was sifted and settled and a perfect Canon of Scripture deliberately formed; it died out as medieval ignorance deepened, and because there was no longer knowledge or criticism enough in the world to keep such a discussion alive." Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, xxv.

gate, thus declaring all its books to be of equal divine authority. There were some who pleaded for a revision of the text, or even a new version of the Greek, but that way lay peril; it was safer to decree the inspiration of St. Jerome, and the faithful were advised that the Holy Spirit had dictated the translation just as He had dictated the originals.

It would seem that the Reformation might be expected to bring with it such a free investigation of the Church tradition as should lead to a recasting of the Canon, but in fact nothing whatever was accomplished to affect the Tridentine settlement in the slightest degree. The movement was indeed a revolt against the authority of the Church which appealed to Scripture for its justification. Hence the authority of Scripture had to be derived from a source independent of the Church, and Zwingli explicitly contradicts Augustine when he says: "Whoever pretends that the Gospel is nothing without the sanction and approbation of the Church speaks blasphemy." Calvin and other leaders took the position that the Bible as the immediate work of God holds its authority only from itself; not the Church but the Holy Spirit is guarantor of Scripture, and the Spirit addresses the individual directly and not through the medium of the Church. The interpretation of the Scriptures is to be sought from themselves alone by faith and piety; the Holy Spirit in our hearts bears witness to their divine truth, and the evidence of their inspiration is their power to inspire the religious soul. This theory of the "inner witness," the illumination of the Spirit, is not advanced to meet polemical exigencies, it belongs to the circle of ideas essentially characteristic of Protestantism—regeneration, justification, grace, faith—and to that element of mysticism which is dominant in all deep personal religion. It is obvious that if this religious intuition is to judge of the

truth and worth of Scripture it must be able to determine what is Scripture, but while the confessions declare that the sanction of the inner witness is the criterion of canonicity, they assume that it has nothing to do but ratify the canon as already established.<sup>1</sup> Scholars were indeed aware of the fact, which Erasmus had pointed out, that seven of the New Testament books—Hebrews, the Apocalypse, James, II Peter, II and III John, Jude—had been admitted into the Canon at a very late date and after long hesitation, and Bucer insisted that the early Church had recognised only twenty as undoubtedly proceeding from the Holy Spirit until the Council of Carthage had cut the knot of all uncertainties regarding the seven disputed writings by its decree that placed them in the Canon. Some were now disposed to reopen the case, and Zwingli declared for the rejection of the Apocalypse as “not a biblical book.” It was found difficult however to determine the status of a doubtful writing by the intuitional principle, because the witness of the Spirit, or the impression received from a book with scriptural claims, would vary considerably according to individual temperament, and one might be edified by a writing that would leave another unmoved. Thus the Protestant

<sup>1</sup> The Belgic Confession, after giving the list of the New Testament books, goes on to say: “These are the only books we receive as canonical, and we believe all that is contained in them not so much because the Church receives them as because the Holy Ghost witnesses in our hearts that they proceed from God.” The Gallic Confession speaks to the same effect: . . . “not merely on account of the common consent of the Church, but much more from the witness of the Holy Spirit and the inward conviction He gives us; for it is He who teaches us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical writings.” The Anglican Articles are even silent concerning the inward witness and content themselves with saying: “In the name of the Holy Scriptures we understand those canonical books of whose authority there was never any doubt in the Church. . . . All the books of the New Testament as they are commonly received we do receive and account them canonical.”

principle might lead different men to construct different canons, that is to say, might result in there being no canon at all. The Swiss Reformers perceived this, but they held to the principle. No Helvetic Confession gives a list of canonical Scriptures; the faithful are left to the guidance of the Spirit in determination of the books to be accepted as Holy Scripture. Other churches declined to go to such lengths. Their Confessions published an authoritative catalogue of the books of the New Testament such as it was in everyone's hands, and with this all further discussion of the canonicity of any book was arrested.

A somewhat different principle had been announced by Luther to determine the canonical claims of a given book and to estimate its value. It was his intense conviction that the whole of Christianity was summed up in the theses of salvation by grace through the expiation of Christ, and of justification by faith alone to the exclusion of all merit by works. This is what he called the Gospel, and for him this was the scriptural revelation. While Calvin declares in general terms that the Spirit within us testifies to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, Luther insists that what decides the question of inspiration is the teaching of each book concerning Christ and salvation. This is also the test of the relative worth of the several books, and accordingly the Gospel of John, the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians and the first Epistle of Peter are "the very kernel and marrow of all the books." The first three gospels are of greatly inferior rank, for they deal with the works of Christ, which profit us nothing, rather than with his teaching which leads to salvation. As to the Apocalypse he agreed with Zwingli; Hebrews was wrong on the Atonement, Jude was of no use, and James was worse than worthless. Whatever we think of Luther's principle it was one that offered the Reformers

a stronger position on the scriptural question. The subjective criterion left it possible for one to take his preferences and prejudices for the witness of the Spirit, but when Luther, resolved to know nothing but Christ crucified, took the Protestant theology for the measure of canonicity, he found, as it were, a rudder to steer to some issue the discussion which had drifted so long upon the fluctuations of opinion and the cross currents of opposing testimony. And if we object that in this he subordinates Scripture to his Pauline, or Augustinian, system, he might reply with logic on his side that truth must take precedence of the witness who attests it. The Humanists might have approached the Scriptures from the viewpoint of historical criticism and in the dispassionate temper of the Scholar, but to the Reformers the Canon was not a collection of the writings of a certain class of persons at a certain date; it was the record of inspired utterances revealing religious truths of transcendent interest. It follows, Luther contends, that the content and spirit of each book must of itself decide its canonicity, and it is on the ground of dogmatic incompatibility that he rejects James and Jude, Hebrews and the Apocalypse. The authority of Scripture then is not supreme; the supreme authority is his "Gospel" of a crucified Saviour. His issue with the Church is not the opposition between Scripture and tradition, but between the claims of a personal religious belief and the discipline of the Catholic organisation. Hence while the doctrinal criterion of inspired Scripture, as more objective than the intuitional, might seem somewhat steadier and likely to issue in safer conclusions, it is plain that after all neither could lead to any conclusive definition of the Canon. Such an open, indefinite condition of the question, which left room for freedom and variety of judgment on points of detail, Luther and his fellow workers may have regarded with equanimity, but with the rise of the confessional



schools in a later generation the Protestant spirit lost the fresh energy of its dayspring, its estimates of Scripture began to borrow from the external evidence of history the support it had formerly been able to disregard, and the imperious demand to define and systematise, to reduce everything to rule, finally brought the Swiss and German theologians to the position taken by the French and Dutch, which was nothing else than acceptance of the Canon established by the Church.<sup>1</sup>

The singular history of the Canon carries with it its own commentary, but I would call attention to a few points which our brief survey has brought to our notice. It is apparent that the Canon as finally established was formed on no principle and by no method that would ensure the collection of the best and most valuable works of the Christian literature, for the intrinsic merit of a book selected was not in question. Its spiritual power, its value for religion, was little if at all regarded, while a divine authority was conferred upon it extrinsically on quite worthless evidence to its authorship. It is said that a selection according to merit had already been made in the public readings, and that the bishops and theologians from the second to the fifth centuries practically only ratified existing usage. It is true, as I have recognised, that the instinctive judgment of religious feeling was effective in determining the choice of certain books it found congenial and helpful, but this was only one of a complex of factors that went to making up the consecrated collections of the churches. Vague tradition, local prepossession, individual taste, practical needs, relations more or less intimate between the various churches, the wider or more limited circulation of a book,—all such

<sup>1</sup> The interesting history of the transformation of ideas that led to this reaction in favor of the authority of tradition is sketched by Reuss in the seventeenth chapter of his valuable work.

loose and random influences left the outcome largely to mere chance. Moreover this intuitional criticism of which so much is made did not work so as to support the theory that it is the virtual maker of the Canon. If it discerned the high merit of the four gospels and the Pauline Epistles, it was no less ready to stamp with its approval such works as the gospel of the Hebrews, the Acts of Paul, the Epistles of Barnabas and Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas and the Apocalypse of Peter. In the case of these writings the selection of the churches was not allowed to stand, and the assertion that the ecclesiastical authorities only gave the force of law to what was already consecrated by custom is not in accord with the facts. Whatever consideration they extended to the usage of the churches, the decision of canonical questions remained with the bishops, and they did not hesitate to exercise their authority, as we have seen in the early case of Serapion and the gospel of Peter. It is difficult to ascribe the fixing of the New Testament Canon to the "marvelous tact" of religious sentiment, divinely guided in its choice, when we find the African Councils ruling out the books mentioned above, with many others more or less in favor with the churches, while they decreed the canonicity of the five Catholic Epistles—James, II Peter, Jude, II and III John—which now "emerge without warning from obscurity" (Jülicher), and of Hebrews and the Apocalypse each of which was rejected by half of the Church Catholic.

Owing to the proscription of uncanonical writings we have probably lost valuable historical material. The Acts of Paul, for instance, might have been of great service in correction of what is untrustworthy and misleading in the canonical Acts of the Apostles. The historical criticism of the New Testament inaugurated by Baur has achieved so much that it seems deplorable it should be shut out from the wider field where it might have

gathered a fuller harvest. Even if it be admitted that the literature which has perished, or only survives in scattered fragments, was of distinctly inferior quality, still it would help to give fuller and clearer expression to the life and thought of early Christian times. Shakespeare is in a class by himself, but if the folio of 1623 had been canonised, we should have lost all the Elizabethan Drama, except the seven worthless plays it mistakenly assumes to be Shakespearian.<sup>1</sup> But it is a fairly safe assertion that a collection of the *best* Christian writings would have been somewhat different from that which we possess in the New Testament, and that the rule of apostolicity worked disastrously both to keep out and to let in. That rule was enforced by the Church under its oligarchic constitution, and in effect mainly by a majority of the Councils of Hippo and Carthage—if not by the voice of Augustine alone.<sup>2</sup> But the apostolicity decreed was a mere assumption. No evidence was ever produced for the highly improbable supposition that any of the Twelve were writers of narratives or letters. Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament only six Epistles of St. Paul have any valid claim to apostolic authorship in the narrower sense the term had by this time acquired.<sup>3</sup>

On the whole the judgment of a German critic can hardly be disputed that the historian of early Christian

<sup>1</sup> "We have no right to single out the most meritorious productions of the age—four, for example, out of hundreds of gospels—and while paying unlimited reverence to these as the sole inspired repositories of Christian verity, to anathematise the rest as heretical. All have a value when considered as indices of the mental life of the period of their origin." Mackay, *The Rise and Progress of Christianity*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> "Augustine was the animating spirit of both Councils, so that they may be taken as expressing his views on the subject." Davidson, *Enc. Brit.*, Art. "Canon."

<sup>3</sup> It was not agreed whether the writer of Jude was Judas the Zealot or Judas the brother of the Lord; but if it was not certain that he was the one or the other, how be sure that he was either?

literature must ignore the distinction made by the Canon between its productions. And this brings us to the point of prime importance that remains to be emphasised: It is not that the Canon, made as it was made, is arbitrary, defective and unsatisfactory; it is that the Canon in its whole nature and notion is a huge mistake, that it were better there never had been a Canon at all. Canonisation created an artificial distinction, unknown to early times, according to which certain books were selected out of the current literature and set forth by the Church, as a collection of inspired Scripture, a divinely authoritative revelation, determined and established as such by ecclesiastical law. It postulated the primitive notions of a revelation and inspiration operating mechanically upon a passive subject which took rise in times of intellectual darkness, and which to one who encounters them today in the light of modern knowledge can only appear childish and silly. From these notions the Protestants failed to free themselves, and so made it impossible for them to advance upon the line opened by the first generation of Reformers. The denial of the right of a Canon to give authority to books of Scripture, and reliance upon the inner witness in the Christian consciousness, should have led to an abandonment of the underlying assumption of a revelation communicating definite doctrines, and of an inspiration suspending the faculties of men, and residing in the words written at dictation. Histories and letters written by men for men, stamped with their writers' individuality, issuing from a religious experience unique in depth and intensity which they would bring others to share, touched with the fire of a divine influence that is ever seeking the spirit of man,—these canonisation has turned into a Pagan book of oracles, infallible, inerrant in its every deliverance.<sup>1</sup> To canonisation we owe the

<sup>1</sup> In Andrew White's *Seven Great Statesmen* (pp. 85 and 123) we may read

Bibliolatry which has locked up the Scripture and thrown away the key. The superstitious reverence paid to a supernatural Book, let down as it were direct from heaven, is literally a fetich-worship, or that of an inanimate object taken for the seat of a divine presence and power; and this has shut men out from all intelligent reading of the Bible, from all appreciation of its living reality, its real significance, and its priceless value to religion, as the history of Protestantism attests. The Holy Scriptures have been held in veneration, but have been little read, except by certain pious Christians, perfunctorily, and as an edifying exercise—a chapter a day. As late as 1873 Arnold's simple suggestion or reminder that writings covering a thousand years, published in one volume that we call the Bible, are a literature and to be studied as a literature came to many with the shock of a startling novelty. Since then old views have undergone a change. It is matter for thankfulness in the interests of religion that a gradual popularisation of the results of modern scholarship is bringing to the light of day a new Bible which is the old, freed from age-long misconceptions; and the removal of an adventitious sacredness is setting free the intimate appeal of its inherent power to the intelligence as to the hearts of men.<sup>1</sup>

---

how during the wars of religion the authority of Holy Scripture was invoked to sanction all manner of inhuman cruelty and crime.

<sup>1</sup> "The condition of arriving at a true appreciation of the Bible is that we let it take its place amongst the literatures of the world, that we do not fence it off or separate it or guard it in any special way. . . . Pygmalion wrought in marble the figure of a nymph. Stately and beautiful her form, but she had no life in her. Then at his prayer the statue descended from the pedestal and became flesh with all the glowing loveliness of a living woman, and a woman's heart beat within her bosom. So the Bible has come down from the pedestal on which it stood, not to be dishonored, but to be quickened with the life of our humanity and to be the companion, the comforter, the inspirer of our daily life." R. A. Armstrong, *God and the Soul*, 172.



## 5. *The Church*

### a. *The Pauline Churches*

The organisation of the Christian churches in its rudimentary phase and its development during the first three centuries is a subject to which scholars have devoted much learned research, a research which would have been more fruitful in results had it not been prompted so largely by a desire to find in primitive practice support for various ecclesiastical theories rather than to bring to light the facts of history. I have no space to follow the course of that history, but it will be enough for my purpose to point out the contrast between the earliest condition of the Christian communities and its complete transformation in the later day of the Catholic Church.

The Acts of the Apostles opens with a description of the infant church of Jerusalem, according to traditions gathered by the author half a century after the events to which they refer. Though of quite uncertain authority, in the main the picture it presents appears to be taken from life. The little group of brethren assembled in an upper room enlarges with new adherents gained by the preaching of Jesus the Christ. They are of one heart and one mind in their common life; they make over their possessions to the community; they give themselves to prayer and praise and mutual exhortation, and all come together at the common meals of the spiritual family. They are eagerly awaiting the coming of their Lord, and their indifference to all material interests, their complete detachment from all worldly occupations are a natural consequence of their eschatological obsessions. A further consequence is the penury which before long will

fall upon the community of Jerusalem and will find relief from the subsidies collected by the Apostle to the Gentiles.

After the expulsion of the Hellenists from Jerusalem, which left the Judaising Christians in unopposed ascendancy, a change occurs in the aspect of the Christian community. The leadership has passed from Peter to James, the brother of the Lord, to whom this relationship gave a commanding prestige, and with the advent of this personage there appear indications of a rudimentary organisation on the model of the Jewish synagogue. Beside the Apostles and the brethren there is mention of Presbyters (A. V. Elders) charged with certain administrative functions, or acting with the Apostles as a deliberative Council (Acts xi, 30; xv, 4, 6, 22, 23). When or how these Presbyters took rise we are not told, but they can scarcely be regarded as an official order instituted by formal procedure. To infer from the name their identity with the Presbyters of later days would be to miss the historical perspective and put on the same plane things separated by long distance. It would seem that the tacit demands of the community created their supply. Some persons had to be entrusted to receive the contributions brought by Barnabas and Paul, and take charge of their equitable distribution. When it had to be decided what attitude the community should adopt toward the converted Pagans, a question so difficult and likely to rouse such passionate excitement could not safely be submitted to the general assembly without previous consideration by a more restricted body—just as today a legislative measure is referred to a committee before its presentation to the parliament or congress. It is immaterial that the account of the proceedings in Acts xv is contradicted by St. Paul; whatever took place on the occasion of this visit of the

Apostle, at some time a situation must have presented itself to call for similar action on the part of the Elders. At first it was probably those of highest standing and most respected who naturally came to the front and came to be called by this familiar name.<sup>1</sup> Such authority, or rather influence, as they exercised would be due to their personal qualities, to the recognised ability and devotion with which they served the interests of the community. At the same time, the constitution of the synagogue must have come of itself to the mind of the Jewish Christians, and with this the title Elder would take on an official character. These sectaries of Jerusalem formed a little society apart in the midst of the great Jewish society, and when the necessities of their common life urged them to create some organisation of their own, it was naturally assimilated to that of Jews in foreign lands subject to alien authority. And so in the course of a few years there appears in this earliest Christian community a group of Elders, like those of the Jewish synagogue, acting as a council of direction. Acts xv preserves a Judeo-Christian tradition which reveals the ambition of this presbyteral council to take to itself the same supreme authority over the newly founded Christian churches as that exercised over all Judaism by the Sanhedrim of Jerusalem. It was a dream not to be realised. The numerical superiority rapidly gained by the Gentile Christians, the break-up of the mother Church at the approach of the legions of Titus, shattered these schemes of imperial domination; but the ecclesiastical conception which inspired them lived on, Jewish in origin, antagonistic to the teachings of Jesus, but

<sup>1</sup> The Elders of the Synagogue, the *Senatus* or *γερονσια* of the municipalities, were terms expressive of a seniority in years that no longer had a literal significance, but they witnessed to the tradition handed down from the assemblies of primitive society in which the heads of families took precedence and authority was the prerogative of age. "It is not length of days that makes the true Elder," observes Philo, "but a life given to wisdom and virtue."

destined to a full development in his Church. What the Elders of Jerusalem attempted the General Councils carried into effect, and ruled the religious life of Christendom until the evolution, long since accomplished in the several churches, finished its course in the Church Universal and the conciliar authority yielded to the papal despotism.

While these Christian Jews, their vision bounded by the horizon of Palestine, were content to win some few adherents in the Holy City, where the Messiah should establish his throne and whither he should summon his elect from the four quarters of the earth, the Hellenistic Christians had already entered upon that career of missionary activity which was to lead to the conversion of the world. It was only giving a new direction to efforts of long standing. Monotheistic religions, appealing to all mankind, are in their nature missionary religions, and the Jews of the Dispersion were zealous propagandists of their faith. Difficult as was their task they were surprisingly successful, and wherever there were Jewish colonies the synagogues were thronged with proselytes. It is true that to obtain such a result Judaism had to adapt itself to the environment. It was not only preached in Greek, but preached, as M. Réville puts it, "*à la grecque*." Much that was harsh and repellant in the character of the native Jew had become softened and refined by contact with a more cultured society, and so too the religion of the Hellenists lost something of the hard narrowness of Palestine under the influence of the genial Greek spirit, and was enlarged and enriched by assimilating the best and most helpful ideas of Greek wisdom. And yet, however attractive to serious-minded Pagans was this blend of prophetic teachings with theological speculations of Platonism and high precepts of Stoic morality, the dead weight of the legal observances re-

mained a serious obstacle to the advance of Hellenistic Judaism, in spite of the attenuations and accommodations it was obliged to allow the converts. And the question of the Law made trouble for many a Hellenist Jew. As an idealist, trained in the allegorical methods, outward rites and forms were to him merely symbols and their moral significance the only thing of worth; yet as a Jew he must remain faithful in practice to the Mosaic ordinances.

In his valuable work, *Les Origines de l'Episcopat*, M. Jean Réville has pointed out the analogy between the situation thus created and that which arose in the Christian Church on the eve of the Reformation. Erasmus and his colleagues missed no occasion of declaring that the practices of catholic devotion—fastings, processions, pilgrimages—were in themselves of no religious value, but only the repentance and inward communion with Christ of which they were the outward manifestation. Upon this some began to ask themselves why these useless observances should be kept up, and the bolder spirits even questioned whether they were not harmful to the spiritual life and of a tendency to deceive the Christian concerning the true conditions of salvation. But when the Reformers, convinced of the deplorable effects of such religious materialism, called for the suppression of these ceremonial practices, neither Erasmus nor the other Humanists were prepared to draw the necessary conclusion from their own premises, and the practical realisation of their principles had to be the work of an ecclesiastical revolution. So in the synagogues of the Hellenic world all tended logically to the abandonment of the practices of Jewish legalism. The rapid influx of converts to the religion of Jehovah, not Jews by race, suggested the possibility of a covenant with the Eternal founded on this common worship without regard to ethnic distinc-



tions. And the fact that these fellow-worshippers were not subjected to all the requirements of the Law led insensibly toward a view of its observances as less vitally important than the moral and religious disposition of which they were the sign. Such tendencies were indeed latent and inactive; it needed an ecclesiastical revolution to bring them to full issue. But just as the Reformers of the sixteenth century could never have attained their ends if the spiritual renaissance of Humanism had not shaken the hold of ecclesiastical authority upon the minds of men, so the Apostle Paul could not have founded the Christian Church but for the silent evolution in the Jewish communities on pagan soil of the elements of religious universalism—a spiritual monotheism freed from Jewish limitations, a religion already virtually denationalised.

Such were the conditions that made the Hellenistic synagogue the cradle of the new-born faith. The service of the synagogue lent itself readily to the advancement of new views and teachings, and as Jesus had preached the Gospel in the synagogues of Galilee, so Paul and the other missionaries found in these Sabbath assemblies the most favorable opportunity for the preaching of the Christ. Scarcely ever did that preaching fail to win some of its hearers, but it was not long in making trouble. For all their liberal education the mass of the Hellenist Jews were not prepared to break with the Mosaic Law and with their Palestinian brethren, and sooner or later, according to the circumstances of each case, Paul and his friends were expelled from the synagogue and its door was finally closed against them. And now it was a question of holding together the little group of disciples who abandoned the synagogue to follow the Apostle. At first a handful of believers gathered in the house of one of their members forming what was called an ἐκκλησία κατ' οἶκον.

The sixteenth chapter of Romans, which was originally part of a letter addressed to an Asiatic community, mentions a number of persons who evidently offered their homes for such assemblies, and the same thing is told us of others in Acts, Corinthians, and Philemon. Later on a hall was hired, as at Ephesus where Paul taught in the school of the philosopher Tyrannus. In this way the Christians were provided with a meeting-place to which they could draw in adherents from among the people of the city and where they could unite in the bond of a common faith and life—the faith that Christ had come to save from sin and death, and the life of being good and showing love to the brethren. In large towns, such as Corinth, there seem to have been several such places of assembly, but in the eyes of Paul all the Christians of the city formed a single community. More than that, all the local ecclesiae scattered through Greece and Asia felt themselves to be so many members of a single Ecclesia, the fellowship of all who died with Christ to sin and rose with him to life eternal. For Paul this was the true Church of Christ: catholic in that it embraced all Christians of whatever nationality or social condition—Jew or Greek, male or female, bond or free—but purely spiritual and, as the Reformers called it, invisible; without any corporate organisation, without any conditions or tests of membership other than the individual communion of each member with the Lord Christ, so that in him was the unity of his Church.<sup>1</sup> And if the name Church (Ecclesia) given to this spiritual unity of all Christian believers was at the same time the name of each individual community, it was not only that the part was in the whole but that

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xii, 12–31; xv, 9; Gal. i, 13; iii, 28; Rom. xii, 5. A later writer gives expression to the same ideal conception of the Church: “God’s firm foundation standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” II Tim. ii, 19.

the whole was represented in the part, and St. Paul's Letter is addressed "To the Church of God which is at Corinth." His converts felt that they belonged to the Church as a whole through their attachment to the local community.

It is evident that the Church is much more to the Apostle than a religious community with a special constitution; fundamentally the Church is to him the new humanity itself, uplifted by its unity with the Crucified and Risen out of the whole remaining mass of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

It was not to plant a string of little isolated fraternities that the Apostle broke with the religion of his fathers; rather he aspired to found a vast society spread over the whole world, united by a common faith and inspiration. If we realise the fervor of that inspiration and how the Pauline churches were seething with excitement, we shall find the source of the power of expansion, of future promise, latent in these little conventicles, but we shall not look to find even the germs of a later ecclesiastical organisation. The early Church was a fraternal association that believed itself the precursor of the Kingdom of God on earth. In its very nature such constitution as it had was provisional: when Messiah should come he would establish the institutions of his Kingdom. And when we consider of what diverse human types these primitive communities were composed—deserters from the synagogue, Pagans scarcely detached from their old religious associations, slaves and freedmen catching at the hope of a great salvation, restless spirits eager for new revelations, symbolists of the Alexandrine school, and Gnostics living in an imaginary world, simple honest souls giving themselves to the cause of Christ with all their native good-

<sup>1</sup> Wrede, *Paul*, 119.

ness, and sinners of every sort seeking refuge in a society that offered pardon for the past—it is plain how difficult it would be for such heterogeneous elements to coalesce under any forms of settled order. The Pauline community is a pure democracy and the equality of all its members is complete, for the spiritual independence of every Christian is an integral element in the conception of the Christian life.<sup>1</sup> All is trusted to mutual good will and the spirit of brotherhood, and in the absence of any governing authority there appears in the Church of Corinth, at least, something like an anarchy of individualism. The Apostle Paul, it is true, enjoyed a prestige such as the Greek societies accorded to their founders, but his authority was purely moral and personal and its exercise demanded the greatest caution. In dealing with the disorders and dissensions that agitate the community he appeals to the judgment of his readers; he suggests, leaving it to them to act upon his suggestions; he tries to persuade, but does not attempt to command. Corinth at this date was a cosmopolitan city where ideas, traditions, habits or tendencies of mind the most diverse, mingling or conflicting, gathered around the common hope in Christ. The Corinthian turbulence, the disorderly manifestations of religious exaltation, were at all events a sign of vigorous life. It is plain from the Apostle's Letter that he looked upon this Church with a special fondness, such as one feels for a highly gifted but

<sup>1</sup> "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whosoever would be great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant. . . . Be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your teacher and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven." In these words Jesus condemns the principle of hierarchy which places one class under the tutelage of another, and asserts the fraternal equality of Christians in their common relation to the heavenly Father.

unruly child from whom great things may be expected.

So then, with one exception to be noted later, there are no regular officials in the communities to which St. Paul's authentic letters are addressed. What might appear to be office is not an exercise of authority, but a rendering of service. All such service is freely offered and each man makes himself useful to the community in the line of his special aptitude or gift, which is held to be a divine commission. The Epistles give us two enumerations of these social functions in the primitive community:

God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miraculous powers, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, kinds of tongues (I Cor. xii, 28).

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that was given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth to his teaching; or he that exhorteth to his exhorting: he that giveth let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness (Rom. xii, 6-8).

In these passages the Apostle is simply pointing out the variety of spiritual gifts shared by the faithful. The list is not exhaustive nor sharply discriminative, as if the exercise of one function barred that of another. And the irregular construction which combines the names of impersonal *charismata* with names designating individuals serves to show that it is the spiritual gift that qualifies these latter for their work—that no one is officially appointed to rule or to teach any more than to work miracles or to show mercy. We need not dwell upon the *charismata* of beneficence: the working of miracles, the healing of the sick, the helping



of the needy, the consoling of the afflicted are expressions of the simple faith and ardent brotherly love of the first Christians. The other terms in the passages cited refer to persons who take some part in the leadership and direction of the community, and with them our investigation is concerned.

In after days the title of Apostle was limited to the Twelve with the later addition of St. Paul, but in the primitive Church it was the designation of all missionaries and preachers of the Christ who gave proof of their divine commission by the fruits of their labors. The Apostle was naturally a personage of influence in the Church of his foundation, and to him it looked for oversight and guidance, but so far was the title from conveying any suggestion of official authority that it continued in frequent use in its general sense of envoy or delegate. The two companions of Titus, sent with him to collect the subsidies for the poor of Jerusalem, St. Paul calls "apostles of the churches," and he writes to the Philippian church of the arrival of Epaphroditus, their apostle.<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet, he who speaks from direct inspiration of God and makes known the revelations he has received, is the last one to be regarded as a church official. Unlike the incoherent words and broken phrases of the speaker "in a tongue," unintelligible to his hearers, the utterances of the Prophet are understood of all, for he remains master of his inspiration: "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the Prophets." He is a preacher too; his hot eloquence stirs men's souls, uplifts the devout heart in praise of the divine goodness and brings sinners to their knees in penitence before God. Though the passionate ardor of these enthusiasts might sometimes outrun the limits of a reasonable sobriety, their influence was great

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. viii, 23; Phil. ii, 25.

in quickening and sustaining the mighty religious impulse of the Christian movement.

The Teachers are those who instruct the new converts in what they need to know on becoming Christians. They interpret the Scriptures, explain its difficulties and show the connection of the old dispensation with the new faith. As the Prophets appeal to the emotions, the Teachers address the intellect. They are the learned element in the brotherhood, the apologists of Jesus the Messiah, and with them the earliest theology takes rise. It was they who discovered that all ancient prophecy referred to Jesus and the gospel history. Apollos appears to have been a typical Teacher, and we are told that he was "mighty in the Scriptures"—mighty, that is, in the approved art of putting into Scripture the meaning one desired to extract from it.<sup>1</sup> These offices of prophecy and teaching are open to any one who feels that he has something to say to the brethren, and it is for the assembly to judge whether the discourse or the lesson deserves attention.

So far the ministries mentioned by the Apostle are of a general character and belong, we may say, to the Church at large. Any assembly of Christians would welcome the visit of a Prophet or Teacher, and many of them went from place to place, their frequent journeyings bringing closer the connection between the scattered churches and quickening their sense of union in the common Christian fellowship. We come now to certain functionaries whose services were confined to the local communities of which they were members. They are referred to in the Corinthian Letter as κυβερνήσεις and in that to the Romans as ὁ προϊστάμενος, terms our English version renders respectively as "governments" and "he that ruleth." Another reference to these personages is found

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii, 24-28.

in an earlier Epistle: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you and are over you in the Lord (προϊστάμενους) and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thess. v, 12, 13). Here there is but one class of persons in question. The Proistamenoi—literally, those who are at the head—are those who labor for the good of the community and give counsel and admonition to the brethren. In Romans it is intimated that their distinctive gift or qualification is zeal. This is scanty information, but enough to make it evident that the men who were most active and devoted, who gave their best efforts to foster the growth and consolidation of the young community and were gifted with superior intelligence and capacity to make such efforts effective, naturally took the lead in the direction of affairs. It would be more readily accorded them if they were the oldest members of the association, those whom the Apostle calls the "first fruits." Probably too their relatively easy circumstances gave them a free disposal of their time, such as workers for a living could not command, and enabled them to undertake services requiring the expenditure of money. These then are the leaders of the Church, or according to Romans and Corinthians those who "preside" and "direct." It is equally evident, however, that they are not regularly constituted officials. If that were the case they would have one definite designation, and it would not be put at the end of the Apostle's list of charismata among those of minor importance, where we find the Proistamenoi and the Kuberneseis and the corresponding Poimenes of a deutero-Pauline Epistle.<sup>1</sup> Moreover St. Paul could not ask the Thessa-

<sup>1</sup> "He gave some to be Apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Eph. iv, 11. The term Pastor (ποιμήν) is one of many designations of the Christian minister which did

Ionians to "recognise" their Proistamenoι if there were an established presidency, for then there could be no room for doubt as to the persons who filled the office. As it is, he urges them not to be ungrateful, but to acknowledge those as their true leaders who deserve to be such by their zeal and energy, by their active interest in the common affairs and the exertions they make for the common welfare. And so the authority of the Proistamenoι comes wholly from the services they render. If that of the Apostle was merely moral and personal, undefined and ill assured, a member of the community would certainly be allowed no more. There is need to settle the order of proceedings in the general assembly and to execute the measures decided upon, to ensure the proper conducting of the religious meetings, to organise the missionary work and take care of the new converts, to attend to the various material interests of the community, slight though they may be, and to exercise a general supervision to protect the faithful against false teaching and evil influences. Who will charge themselves with all these duties but those who are willing to take trouble and not spare themselves, to put their time, their energies, and their resources at the disposal of the brethren. These volunteer workers are naturally "at the head" of the community, but they are its servants rather than its masters, and the government of the Church is that of Christ himself inspiring his disciples.<sup>1</sup>

---

not find place in the three orders finally established, though it is still in use in some Protestant churches, as another term, Rector (*ἡγούμενος*), remains in the English Church.

<sup>1</sup> "The organising principle in the Apostolic Churches was nothing less than the sense of the divine in the midst of the community. It was nothing less than the belief in the divine gift, the divine call of some men to take upon themselves the responsibility of personal leadership, to exert influence for the ordering of the affairs of the fellowship of believers. It was nothing less than the belief in an endowment of men with spiritual

In the exceptional instance to which a passing reference has been made we find mention of two orders of officials whose titles have come down to our day. St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians is addressed "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." In the passage from Romans cited above the term *diakonia*, translated "ministry," has a very general sense and applies to any kind of service rendered to the brethren. Such was its accepted significance. Deacon and diaconate are expressions the Apostle frequently employs to designate himself and his work; Christ he calls a *diakonos* of the circumcision (Rom. xv, 8), and as late as the age of Eusebius the Bishop is called *διάκονος λόγου*, a servitor of the word, and his bishopric *διακονία τῆς ἐπίσκοπης*. It would seem, however, that the *Diakonoι* addressed in Philippians and conjoined with the *Episkopoi*, personages not elsewhere mentioned in St. Paul's Epistles, formed like these latter a class of specialised functionaries. The community of Philippi was the earliest of the Apostle's plantations in Europe and of longest experience in the Christian life, and this Letter, the last that came from Paul's hands, is later in date by several years than those to the Corinthians and the Romans; hence we may expect that at the time of its writing the organisation of the Philippian Church would be more advanced than such as appears in the earlier Epistles. It would aid this rapid development that the little Christian association was not harassed by the

---

power to do these things, which was exactly parallel to the gift of grace by which men led acceptably the services of worship; and indeed this practical service was never separated from the leadership in worship or from the service of the word. An organisation for the government of the Church, in the sense in which we ordinarily understand these words, organisation and government, would be (in the view of apostolic times) a contradiction of the essence of Christianity and of the nature of the Church itself." Moore, *The New Testament in the Christian Church*, 228-229.



antagonism of the Jews nor distracted by the internal dissensions which elsewhere were provoked by the opposition of the Judaisers.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere else did the Apostle meet with such fidelity and constant devotion as in this peaceable and practical community which was the first to perceive the advantages of a regular division of labor. The mention of bishops and deacons at Philippi brings to light one fact of the first importance to a true view of early Church history, and that is that from the beginning and during its whole course there were notable differences of organisation in the several Christian communities according to their origin, their composition, their peculiar circumstances; and the development of their internal constitution was as varied and diverse as the local conditions which gave it direction. Whatever they were, these primitive bishops and deacons, unknown to the other Pauline churches, assuredly were not yet the clerical officials who appear under the same names after a century of ecclesiastical evolution. The title *Episkopos* was not an invention of the Philippian Christians. It was in use among the Greeks in old Athens of the classic period and in the municipalities and private associations of the first century, and denoted an official charged with an administrative control of the finances and the execution of the decrees and regulations of the city or society. When we find the community of Philippi giving to certain of its members this title of *Episkopoi*, one unknown to Jewish or Christian terminology, it is reasonable to infer that it was because their functions corresponded with those of officers bearing the same or an equivalent title

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi, 12-24 (the "We" document). There is no synagogue at Philippi, but only an open "place of prayer" by the river, and the women who meet there are proselytes of pagan origin. There is no mention of violence on the part of Jews, as in other cities; it is the Macedonians who have Paul arrested on the charge of introducing Jewish customs.

(Epimeletai) in the numerous religious societies of the day. And though, except for the bare mention of them in the superscription, the Epistle to the Philippians is silent concerning these Episkopoi, this inference finds confirmation in the occasion of its writing. Paul wrote to thank the Philippian brethren for the donation sent to him at Rome by the hands of Epaphroditus. The assembly had voted a certain sum in aid of his necessities, and since the Apostle addresses the Episkopoi in particular in his letter of acknowledgment, it would appear that the execution of the decision, the collection and dispatch of the money voted, was their charge. The Diakonoi included in the address were probably those whose "services" were limited to practical and material affairs, especially the distribution of alms, in subordination to the Episkopoi.<sup>1</sup> The association of these two classes of officials in the earliest writing that mentions their existence points to the origin of the intimate relations that subsisted between the episcopate and the diaconate in the Catholic Church.

It is in accordance with the usage of the Greek associations that we find a plurality of Episkopoi in the Philippian Church, but there is no ground whatever for the assumption which has been so confidently maintained that these Bishops are simply Presbyters under another name.<sup>2</sup> In no one of the genuine Epistles of St. Paul is there any mention of the Presbyters who later on made their appear-

<sup>1</sup> This specific application of the general term diakonoi seems to have followed pagan usage. "Diakonoi was not only a common name for servants, but was specially applied to those who at a religious festival distributed the meat of the sacrifice among the company." Hatch, *Organisation of the early Christian Churches*, 50.

<sup>2</sup> "It is a fact now generally recognised by theologians of all shades of opinion that in the language of the New Testament the same officer in the Church is called indifferently bishop or presbyter." Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 93.

ance in all the Christian churches, and in the communities to which these Epistles are addressed there is no trace of such an order of officials as we have met with in the church of Jerusalem. The plural Episcopate of Philippi was a puzzle to those who fancied that from the first a church could have but one bishop, and seemed enough to establish the inference that these primitive bishops were identical with presbyters; but from the moment that a more thorough study of the private associations of the Greek world supplied a satisfying explanation of the presence of these officers in the little Macedonian community no reason for such identification remained.<sup>1</sup>

As to the relations of these Episkopoi to the other dignitaries of the community, the prophets and teachers, and the leaders or directors who are elsewhere called

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx gives us a discourse of St. Paul to the Presbyters of Ephesus and at v. 28 we read: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood." These are words which the author of Acts puts in the mouth of the Apostle, according to the well-known usage of antiquity, and they really reflect his own conceptions and the conditions of his own time. Paul certainly believed that the Holy Spirit was constantly active in the Church, but it was in the bestowal of spiritual gifts, not in the conferring of official dignities. That notion belongs to the ecclesiastical materialism of a later time when the early founts of inspiration were coming to be canonised. So too when we find the representatives of the Ephesian church who are called Presbyters in v. 17, addressed as Bishops in v. 28, this confusion of titles is of the writer's time. Furthermore, from the name of Presbyters given to these Ephesian notables we cannot infer the existence at the time of this interview of a regular presbyteral government at Ephesus, such as appears in the next age, unless we are prepared to reject the testimony of the Pauline Epistles. If they are called Presbyters whom Paul summons to Miletus, they are not the constituted officials of the Pastorals. They are men who have received the name of Elder which was common to Greek and Jewish usage, because being those of oldest standing, the most capable, most active members of the community, they have assumed the direction of affairs. In a word, they are the Proistamenoi of Corinthians and Thessalonians under another name, the natural leaders of the church in right of their qualifications for leadership.

Proistamenoι, we are without information, but it may be inferred from the analogy of the Greek societies that they were entrusted with certain definitely restricted administrative functions and held a position of confidence, honorable but subordinate. This embryo of the Catholic Episcopate was still quite indeterminate and gave no sign of what its future development was to be.

Our sources of information do not furnish us with answers to all the questions we would like to ask concerning the life of the early Christian churches, but in the general view we obtain of them one fact stands out distinctly: there is no type of ecclesiastical government, no definite ecclesiastical organisation, instituted by the founders of the churches in pagan lands.<sup>1</sup> In these little fraternal associations, all taken up with their new beliefs and hopes and holding loosely to this world which was to pass away, religious inspiration, the power of the Spirit of Christ in the souls of the faithful, was felt to be the only true source of authority. The commission of the prophet or teacher was the recognition of the community that the one who spoke to them was called of God and endowed for his ministry with power from on high. So with every other functionary: any man moved by the Spirit might take upon himself any service in the church, and his efficiency was the sign of a divine appointment. In a word, the idea of authority, of government, was unknown to an organisation—if we may use that term—purely

<sup>1</sup> "There were no regulations, no leader with peculiar prerogatives; there were only voluntary services which established a moral claim to grateful recognition. The self-government of the congregation is so palpable that it excludes any government by officials, especially any office of a guiding teacher, for there was no other teaching than that which depended on individual talent and the free impulse of the believers. Paul always writes to the entire congregation; no governing office is required to achieve its unification; the binding tie is the meeting for general edification and for the Lord's Supper." Pfeleiderer, *Christian Origins*, 203-204.

To the same effect see Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age*, ii, 310-311.

charismatic. The Christian's sense of personal freedom was voiced in the words attributed to Jesus: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Here then is a striking characteristic of primitive Christianity, the entire absence of a clerical order in the Church. The all-common priesthood of the faithful, which was a fundamental idea of Christianity, was in effect the non-existence of any priesthood whatever. All the acts subsequently reserved to the clergy, such as preaching, administration of the sacraments, the declaration of the forgiveness of sin, while preferentially performed by the leaders of the church, were by no means their exclusive prerogative. When later on the word clergy appears it merely denotes at first a position in the community which was open to all; it does not imply rank or authority or class separation.<sup>1</sup> And so there were no special celebrants of worship, for worship in the spirit was of an elementary simplicity and all the brethren might take active part in it. He who would, gave voice to the word of prayer or praise, of exhortation or admonition; and if, as at Corinth, enthusiasm gave rise to disorder, the Apostle's remedy is not regulation by a presiding official, but the self-control and consideration for others which he urges upon those filled with the Spirit. So with the common meal where the death of Christ was commemorated according to the instructions of the Apostle. It was meant to foster the sense of brotherhood in the Lord among those who gathered at its table, but when greed and selfishness ignored the poorer brother, St. Paul would not resort to measures of repressive discipline, but

<sup>1</sup> In Acts (xv, 4) the "laity" of after days are spoken of as constituting the Church: "they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders." And even in his day Tertullian ventured to declare: "Where three are gathered together in Christ's name there is a church, although they be laymen."



sought to fix men's thought on Christ and waken a feeling for the solemnity of the Supper in those who lacked the kindly Christian sentiment. Always he acted on this principle. In the matter of meats that came from a heathen sacrifice he would not lay down a law; he pointed out that it was a question of conscience, of a man's own and also of his brother's, which latter must be considered, for love was the supreme law of Christian conduct. He would not impose a morality from outside, but tried to educate his free communities to form their own moral standards under the guidance of the Spirit.

The meetings for worship were open to all comers, since they were in some sort a missionary agency, and though the eucharistic Agape was a fraternity feast for members only, it was not yet a Mystery for the initiate, and the baptism that gave admission to the community was offered unconditionally to all who would receive it.<sup>1</sup> For the Apostolic Churches were free from the temper of exclusiveness which is the mark of a religious sect. The Christians were not zealots for a creed or a cultus; their energies were centred on the moral regeneration that should bring the salvation of mankind. What concerned them were the things of the spirit, their own salvation and that of their brethren of yesterday, Jews or Pagans. This work of salvation not only enlists the Apostles, Prophets, Teachers who go from place to place wherever the Spirit calls them, but in each community the most ardent and devoted give themselves to the spiritual interests of the brotherhood and of its members individually; upholding the faltering, reclaiming the backslider, lending to all who need it the encouragement and moral support which the strong hold at the service of the weak. This cure

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Acts viii, 36-38. Even in the interpolation (v. 37), made to suit the requirements of a later day, the only condition is the Ethiopian's confession of belief in Christ with all his heart.

of souls is the highest office of the Proistamenoï or Presbuteroi, for a society entirely devoted to spiritual objects needs above all spiritual leaders. Early Christianity was a way of life. The bond of association was a common ideal and a common effort toward its realisation which had to be strenuously maintained. The Christian communities were unsheltered by a monastic retirement; they lived in the world, in daily contact with a decadent and corrupt society from which they had been rescued by the grace of God. Moral purity was not merely the requirement of their Christian calling, but the very condition of their existence. If the salt should lose its savor, if the strictness of self-discipline should be relaxed, they would collapse, fall back into the evil world and share its doom. For the most part, it may be said, the high standard of Christian morality was maintained without great difficulty. For the most part the Christians were fully conscious of their high calling, and earnest in their endeavor to develop the new life in Christ. For many, conversion had been a genuine metanoia, a decisive break with an evil past, a deep inner transformation, and now their energies were bent on perfecting that which had been begun in them by the Spirit of holiness. Self-control, integrity and kindliness, eagerness to serve and joy in sacrifice, readiness to forgive and patiently endure—such were the qualities they sought to win, for upon each rested his own responsibility for the shining example the followers of Christ must show to “them that were without.” This Christian life, the fact that religion was a life, is the strength and beauty of the early days of faith.<sup>1</sup> In this

<sup>1</sup> “It was not to a higher moral teaching that Christianity owed its victory. Stoicism and Neo-platonism produced moral thoughts of great beauty and purity, more imposing to superficial contemplation than the simple Christian precepts. Yet neither of them could enable artisans and old women to lead a truly philosophical life; Christianity could and did; the apologists point triumphantly to the realisation of the moral ideal

were the germs of social regeneration. Externally the Christian churches might appear, as later they appeared to Pliny, much like other religious associations of the time, but it was not in externalities that their essential character was to be found. They were the product of a spiritual impulse: as Wernle says, the Christian Church was the child of enthusiasm; it arose in a hero-worship the truest and purest that has ever been. Jesus himself and none other was the centre of the new community, present in the veneration, the love, the faith of his disciples. This was the creative force, a sense of the divine in their midst, the sense of a common inspiration from the life-giving spirit of the unseen Lord thrilling all hearts with a fervor of devotion. Doubtless this early Christian life was not exempt from human imperfection, yet the religious history of mankind has nothing to show more simple and more beautiful. Whatever we may think of the claim of the later Church to be the Kingdom of God, the Church of the first days was not far from realising the Kingdom that lay in the mind of Jesus, and that which Paul defined as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Unhappily the little communities that sprang up like flowers in the unclean cities of the pagan world were in the retention of their first freshness as short lived as flowers are. The environment was unfavorable, and in its adaptation to the environment, necessitated by the struggle for existence, the Catholic Church took rise, and with it came the transformation of primitive Christianity.

*b. The Church of the "Pastorals."*

In a document dating from the last years of the first century we catch a glimpse of early Christianity as it

---

among Christians of every standing. That was due to the power which issued from Jesus Christ and actually transformed men." Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, 379.

appears in the country churches of Galilee and Syria, free from the legal servitude of Christian Judaism and unaffected by the metaphysical speculations that distracted the churches of Hellenic Asia. It was in these quiet regions, the scene of the Master's ministry and of the missionary labors of his liberal disciples, the followers of Stephen, that the Galilean Gospel, the real Gospel of Jesus, was preserved by the simple souls who treasured the memory of his living word; and here were gathered those little detached collections of his sayings and doings from which our synoptic gospels are derived. The Teaching of The Twelve Apostles (Διδαχή Κυρίου διὰ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων) is a manual of instructions relative to the religious life of the Christian community, and it brings to view the simple popular conception of the Christian faith. It is one purely moral: to live as Jesus taught while awaiting his return, that is the whole concern of the Christian. The Didache has no theology, no theories concerning the glorified Christ; even in the instructions relating to the eucharist there is no question of his redemptive death. With a teaching purely practical and a sacramental ritual of the simplest, only the mere rudiments of church organisation appear in these Syro-Palestinian communities. They look for edification and inspiration to the itinerant apostles and prophets who bring to them the word of the Lord. Though generally deserving of the high regard accorded them, yet the Didache warns the brethren that these visitors are to be received with caution. There are some who would impart ideas of their own under cover of the Lord's authority, and some who would turn their mission to their own profit. The tree is to be known by its fruits: "Not everyone that speaketh in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he have the ways of the Lord. If one teach so as to promote righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him; but if he teach another teaching,

do not hear him." And again: "If the apostle stop with you, let him remain a day, and another if need be, but if he remain three days he is a false prophet. Or if when he departs he ask for money he is a false prophet." These recommendations addressed to the community at large show that it retains the independent sovereignty of the early days.

From the relations of the church to its spiritual leaders the *Didache* turns to its internal affairs, and among other directions we read that on the Lord's day the brethren are to assemble to break bread and give thanks after confessing their sins, and if anyone has a quarrel with his neighbor he is not to take part in the Supper until they be reconciled, so that the offering shall be pure. And then the manual proceeds: "Elect therefore bishops and deacons worthy of their office, men of good will, tried and approved, not covetous of money; for they too render the services of prophet and teacher." We learn from this passage in the first place that the bishops and deacons are elected by the community; it is not the apostles or prophets who appoint these church officers. It is plain also from the connection that besides their control of the receipt and distribution of the offerings it is the part of the bishops to take care that the eucharistic service be conducted with propriety, that the confession of sin be not neglected and that any disputes between brethren shall be settled by their arbitration before the disputants can be admitted to the Supper. So far the duties of bishops and deacons are confined to matters of administration and discipline, but when it is added that they also serve as prophets and teachers we see that the charismatic constitution of the churches is one that cannot persist and that the first step is taken in the progressive absorption by church officials of the spiritual functions of the primitive free religious life. One cause of this



vitaly important change, as the Didache intimates, is the fact that the prophets are becoming fewer. As it settles into a certain traditional type or norm the early prophetic inspiration is on the wane; yet the edification of the Church cannot be discontinued and it naturally falls to the officers to carry on this work. Moreover their duties of supervision make it especially incumbent on them to prevent the spread of erroneous teaching by false prophets, or the introduction of practices foreign to the Christian tradition. Their only means to this end are warnings and exhortations addressed to the assembly, or to individuals likely to be misled, and so far as they are heeded they tend to become directors of religious teaching and as such in effect teachers themselves. On the whole however it is the view of the Didache that the apostles and prophets, who travel from place to place awakening the fervor of the Christian inspiration, are the true organs of the one Christian Society, and while it is necessary to take precautions against the unworthy who abuse their mission, no one dreams of subordinating them to the local church authorities, though these guardians of the evangelic tradition may on occasion assume their functions.

The Pastoral Epistles of a little later date transport us to a very different scene from that pictured by the Didache. In the Syro-Palestinian churches collections of Sayings of the Lord serve as a criterion of authenticity to apply to the various teachings attributed to Jesus by the itinerant preachers; in the churches of Asia Minor the endeavor is to protect the Christian doctrine—that is, the Pauline theology—against rival speculations by establishing it as an authoritative apostolic tradition, supreme over all deliverances of irresponsible teachers. For the situation was critical. In the cosmopolitan cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, and others of that region, where along with their merchandise the ideas of East and West

were exchanged, apocalyptic, sophists, gnostics, mystics, ascetics, antinomians, and the votaries of many foreign cults crowded upon one another contending for audience. The churches were profoundly agitated by the invasion of a host of voluble visionaries, men's minds were seething with a ferment of strange doctrines, and the Christianity of Paul was in danger of being overwhelmed by the rising flood of intellectual anarchy. To the earnest disciples of the great Apostle it seemed that a stronger government and a stricter discipline were needed to cope with these threatening conditions, and with this end in view the Pastorals were given out, purporting to be Letters addressed by St. Paul to two of his intimate associates to whom he delegates his authority over the churches. The Apostle charges them with the safe-guarding of the Pauline gospel:

I know him whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to guard the deposit which he hath committed unto me against that day. Hold in faith and love of Christ Jesus the type of sound words which thou hast heard from me. That precious (καλήν) deposit which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.<sup>1</sup>

This is the central thought of the Pastorals: Paul received from Christ the deposit of the gospel; before his death he conveyed it to these faithful disciples and they in turn are to hand it on to the directors of the churches appointed or instructed by them. The mission of Timothy and Titus is to promulgate this authentic gospel of salvation and to bar out from the churches all teaching of a different tendency (ἑτεροδιδασκαλία). To this end

<sup>1</sup> II Tim. i, 12-14. The First Epistle ends with the same exhortation: "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to thee, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge (gnosis) which is falsely so called."

they are to take care that the rulers of the churches, upon whom after them the guardianship of the deposit will depend, shall be safe men and such as will not depart from the straight path. Our author trusts that by his device of a regular transmission, officially guaranteed, the Pauline tradition can be maintained against the assaults of individualistic speculation. This is the substitution of an external religious authority for the internal authority which St. Paul had appealed to, and which the Reformers called the "witness of the Spirit"; it is the negation of the principle which inspired those whose faith it undertakes to guard. Paul freed Christianity from Judaism and created a new religious system by assertion of the sovereign authority of individual consciousness enlightened by the Spirit of Christ; now to preserve this system, to maintain the prevalence of Pauline doctrine, his disciples sacrifice this originative principle and declare that the doctrine is certified by the authority of tradition. The Gospel of Jesus is its own evidence, its truth is intuitively discerned; the Pauline gospel in the hands of ecclesiastics is to be accepted because it bears the official stamp of orthodoxy. These men took the easiest way. The churches were beset by a clamor of conflicting doctrines all claiming their adherence; our author brings relief to the bewildered Christians by his theory of tradition. The question is not what is the intrinsic truth of a doctrine, but where does it come from, can it show a regular chain of descent from an unquestionable authority. Hence the rôle of the apostolic delegates, of whom elsewhere no trace is to be found. The teaching of bishops and presbyters they have received from Timothy, Timothy from Paul, and Paul from Christ. That is satisfactory and easy to understand. It is the first form of the Catholic theory. The author of the Pastorals is not aware of the institution of bishops by the Apostle

and therefore does not represent the transmission of Christian truth as through an episcopal succession. He appears to know that the Apostle Paul made it no part of his business to ordain bishops and elders, and consequently it is not possible to name these as immediate depositaries of the apostolic doctrine. And this is why the apostolic delegates are introduced who transmit to the church officials the deposit they have received from St. Paul. Later on, when the theory of apostolic succession has been evolved, these intermediaries become superfluous and Timothy and Titus are made to be bishops of Ephesus and Crete of the then established monarchical type. In point of fact these personages such as they are described in the Pastorals never existed. The mission of the apostolic delegates is a fiction invented to give support to the ecclesiastical regulations which the author is anxious to establish. It is plain that the author of Acts in the discourse which he makes Paul address to the elders of Ephesus knows nothing of the position which according to the Pastorals Timothy holds in that church. At the same time, it is quite possible that co-workers with the Apostle, such as Timothy and Titus, may have been led to offer counsel to the communities they visited in the course of their journeyings, and that on this slight historic basis these pseudepigraphic Epistles are built. Just as the author of Acts, learning from the journal of Paul's companion that the Apostle summoned the Ephesian presbyters to meet him at Miletus, composed a discourse such as according to him should have been delivered on this occasion, so the author of the Pastorals makes Paul write to his trusted deputies the instructions which to his own mind are most suitable for the defense of the Pauline doctrine and the maintenance of order in the churches.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These Letters purporting to be from the hand of Paul we should call forgeries, but we must beware of judging the literary morals of antiquity

How much in the ecclesiastical organisation pictured in the Pastorals represents historical facts, and how much that appears to be already established is only what certain leaders were seeking to introduce, it is difficult to say, for the Church institutions at this time were in process of formation. These Letters belong to a period of transition from the pure democracy of the early communities to the episcopal monarchy which will soon arise.

The Presbyters of the Asiatic churches appear to be the direct successors of the Proistamanoi of the Pauline Epistles; they are the men of eminent piety and zeal who in associations devoted to the moral and religious life naturally come to the front and are looked upon as shepherds of the flock. To them falls the presidency of meetings for deliberation on spiritual interests, and all other duties pertaining to the cure of souls, as it affects the collective community or its members taken individually. But now this unorganised group of primitive Presbyters forms a Presbyterion; the volunteer leaders of the earlier time have become a governing council and their moral influence official authority. This change however has taken place with the sanction of the community, which

---

by the standards of our own day. During the first centuries of our era, and those immediately preceding, it was the common practice for an author relatively obscure to publish his writings in the name of some venerated personage of the past in order to secure the wider hearing and readier acceptance which such distinguished patronage would give them. It was a literary mode or fashion in which neither the writer nor his readers, if by chance they discovered his identity, saw anything reprehensible. Von Soden (*History of the Early Christian Literature*, 317-319) conjectures that in Titus and II Timothy the writer may have made use of genuine letters from the Apostle to his fellow-workers containing personal details which lend verisimilitude to the alleged authorship: a brief note or tablet, Titus i, 1a and 4, and iii, 12-15; and a longer letter, II Tim. i, 1-4, 15-18 and iv, 6-22. On the other hand, Jülicher, criticising these passages, concludes that they too are inventions like the rest. *Introduction to the New Testament*, 190-192 and 199.



in its ultimate supreme authority retains control of its presbyters. In this presbyteral council, as in all such bodies, there are some who take upon them the larger share of the work and others who are content to have them do so, and thus we read: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. For the Scripture saith, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.'"<sup>1</sup> We may learn several things from this brief passage. It appears from the citations that the "honor" due to the elders signifies a material as well as a moral reward. They who devote their time to the service of the community ought to receive an honorarium. There is no question here of a regular salary; the elders receive a share of the offerings brought to the Agape, and to the more diligent should be assigned a larger share. This is an admission that the presbyters were in some measure responsible to the general assembly, since which ones were especially efficient and deserving it must have been left to the assembly to decide, and from this it may be inferred that it had some voice in their election. According to the Pastorals, presbyters are appointed by the apostolic delegates, but the fact appears to be that they were nominated by the council and the choice submitted to the assembly for its ratification. There are some of the presbyters, we are told, who take up the highly meritorious work of preaching and teaching. This then was no part of their original functions, but an assumption of the one belonging to the itinerant missionaries, of whom there is no mention in the Pastorals. To substitute the teaching of authorised officials for the dangerously free utterances of individual inspiration

<sup>1</sup> I Tim. v, 17-18. The Scriptures referred to are Deuteronomy and the gospel of Luke. It is noteworthy that this late gospel is already quoted as "Scripture."

was an innovation which naturally found favor in writings so imbued with the spirit of ecclesiasticism. The increasing power of the Presbyterate and the grave importance of the duties assigned to it make it imperative that great care be exercised in the selection of its members, and Timothy is warned to "lay hands hastily on no man." In I Tim. iii, 1-7 and Titus i, 5-9 we have a detailed enumeration of the qualifications required of elders and bishops, among which we note that they must be married men, and such as order their household wisely and well, for in this they give promise of an efficient management of church affairs. This must have seemed a strange requirement in the days of the celibate clergy.

In the passages referred to and in Acts xx-28 the terms elder and bishop are apparently used indiscriminately, as if there were no distinction between them, and that in fact there was none is the Catholic tradition from the time of Jerome.<sup>1</sup> We may ask with Juliet, What's in a name? but after all a name has some significance, and why two names if there is but one office? Episkopoi, it may be repeated, was the name of the financial officers of the private associations, religious or secular, so numerous at this time throughout the Empire, and there cannot be a reasonable doubt that in the Christian communities the same name denoted a similar officer. Hence it is in connection with a financial transaction that we first find mention of Episkopoi in a Christian church, and hence in the Pastorals, as in the Didache, it is a chief requirement of Episkopoi that they be men not covetous of money. Scanty as were the resources of these little associations

<sup>1</sup> Jerome maintained that the churches were originally governed by a body of presbyters, but in course of time one was elected to preside over the rest. This theory that the first bishops were presiding elders gave support to Jerome's opposition to a relative depreciation of the Presbyterate which was a tendency of his time; it was not supported by any special knowledge on his part of conditions subsisting in the sub-apostolic age.

there were receipts and expenditures of which account must be kept, and the management of the common funds was the responsibility of the Episkopos as the "steward of God" (θεοῦ οἰκονόμος, Titus i, 7). Above all the Episkopos was chief almoner and it was as such that his office acquired increasing importance, a result due to the spirit of Christianity and to the prevalent economic depression. At this time poverty was widespread and its heavy pressure roused all classes to active measures of relief. Nowhere did the impulse of benevolence find such enthusiastic expression as in the Christian communities, for while others might be charitable, charity was of the essence of their life, and many of the early writings exalt almsgiving above prayer and fasting to the chief place in Christian duty. To the poor the Gospel was preached from the first, and the poor flocked into the churches. Moreover to embrace Christianity was often to incur poverty. Some converts were driven from their homes; some had to relinquish employments which the Christian discipline could not tolerate. In time of persecution those in prison, or whose property was confiscated, had to be supported, those sold into slavery to be ransomed, and the widows and orphans of the martyrs to be provided for. The demand was heavy upon the churches and it met with full response from the glad eagerness of brotherly love.<sup>1</sup> That "Christ's poor" were called an "altar of sacrifice" witnesses to the feeling that what was given them was given to God, that the altar of Christian worship was the altar of human need.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> That the communities were able as well as willing to respond to the calls upon their liberality corroborates the assertion of Dobschütz that the main body of their membership was drawn from the middle class of society and not from the proletariat. See Harnack to the same effect: *Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, 139.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xiii, 16: "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

The poor and hungry, the weak and ill-used, the friendless and helpless, to all these the Christian brotherhood opened arms of invitation and drew them within the shelter of its sympathy. Not in the working of miracles, but in these wonders of love lay the power by which Christianity overcame the world. It was the provision of a wise economy that the gifts of Christian charity were not made privately and directly to those in need, but to almoners specially charged with the care of the poor, and it naturally followed that the administration of the fund created by the offerings of the community became a function of great and growing importance. It is significant of this importance that when the bishop of after days had gathered to himself all the powers inherent in the early Christian democracy the title which clung to him was the one relative to his original function, now merged and lost in his wealth of dignities.

At the same time our texts show that besides the control of the finances the Episkopos is charged with a general moral control of the brethren, and it is his duty to maintain observance of the unwritten rules that govern the collective life and secure the good order of the community. With unrestricted freedom of speech and individualism running riot, men's minds were confused by a clamor of contrary teachings concerning both belief and practice, and thus it was a matter of prime necessity to the writer of the Pastorals and his fellow churchmen that the sacred deposit, the so-called apostolic tradition in course of formation, should be committed to the hands of faithful guardians of discipline. To gain submissive acceptance of the "sound doctrine" under the conditions that prevailed was a task requiring tact. The Episkopos is admonished to exercise authority as a wise father rules his family, with gentle firmness and without arrogance or harshness, and the insistence on his moral qualifica-

tions shows that the personal equation is held to count for much in winning the prestige that is sought for the episcopal office.<sup>1</sup> The prevalence of the traditional teaching is, then, the essential point, and it is not only as holder of the purse strings but even more as defender of the faith that the Episkopos rises to predominance. In Asia Minor, as in Syria, he has added to his administrative functions the ministry of the word;<sup>2</sup> for it is his duty to refute false teaching, or if more convenient, to suppress it by stopping the mouths of vain talkers and deceivers.<sup>3</sup> Thus early have the builders of episcopal power discovered that the most practical method of establishing orthodox doctrine is to silence its adversaries.<sup>4</sup>

In Acts xx, 28, as in the Didache and the Epistle to the Philippians, Episkopoi are mentioned in the plural, but the language of the Pastorals intimates that at their later date the churches of Asia had each a single Episkopos. It is possible of course that τὸν ἐπίσκοπον in I Tim. iii, 2, and Titus i, 7 may refer to a category rather than to an individual. But since in the context the writer is speaking of deacons, women, and elders as individuals, to speak of bishops as an order would be an abrupt transition hard to account for. And since these others are mentioned in the plural, why should we not find "bishops"

<sup>1</sup> So in I Peter v, 2-3 it is urged that the Episkopoi in their office of supervision conduct themselves not harshly but persuasively (if this may be taken for the sense of *μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς, ἀλλ' ἐκουσίως*) and not lording it over their charge but making themselves patterns to the flock.

<sup>2</sup> I Tim. iii, 2; Titus i, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Titus i, 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> "The Epistle to Titus is the earliest document in which 'heretics' are mentioned. The heretic is to be admonished once, twice; if he does not yield he is to be rejected. Here we have the new conception of heresy. Heresy is deviation from the teaching of the Church and as such involves condemnation and exclusion. Already the contrast is no longer between good and bad, but between believing and unbelieving. The Church won the day, but at the cost of uniformity and rigidity. The old freedom vanished and with it the rich and varied life of the first age." Wernle, *op. cit.* ii, 233-234.



also in the plural if there were more than one? Indeed, the use of the definite article seems almost decisive of the question: if there were a number of bishops one would naturally write, "bishops must be blameless," etc., or "a bishop must be blameless." On the whole the expression, "*the* bishop must be blameless" can hardly be taken otherwise than as signifying that there was but one bishop in each church.<sup>1</sup> The transition from the plural episcopate to the single bishop must have taken place at some time before the appearance of the omnipotent bishop of the next century, and it marks the first stage in the evolution of that personage. It was a change that came about at different moments in different localities, and in the churches of Hellenic Asia it must have been effected during the years between the composition of the Acts and that of the Ignatian Epistles, and it is in this period that the Pastorals were written.

The motive for merging the episcopate in a single individual may be gathered from the nature of the duties which we have seen were assigned to the Episkopoi. In these Eastern churches, seething with all sorts of dangerous doctrines, the protection and preservation of the "deposit," the tradition of belief and practice, was a charge that would be more safely entrusted to one person than to many, among whom authority and responsibility must be divided, and differing interpretations of Christian truth might lead to error or confusion. It was the need of distinguishing the true Christian teaching derived from Christ or Paul from the many speculative theories that were threatening to take its place that above all led these churches to confide

<sup>1</sup> Such is the significance that Harnack attaches to the passages in question (*The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, 67-68), but he remarks that they are probably interpolations, without assigning any grounds for the probability. Of course if one is persuaded that the single bishop could not have appeared at so early a date, any passage to the contrary effect will naturally be regarded as an interpolation.

to a single person the representation of this authentic tradition. We have evidence of this in the fact that the one bishop makes his first appearance in the documents where alarm at the invasion of subversive doctrines and strenuous insistence on fidelity to the "healthful teaching," the certified tradition, declare themselves for the first time. Other considerations contributed to bring about the change in question. When as administrators of the material interests of the Church the Episkopoi were brought into more frequent relations with the world without, it was an evident advantage that affairs should be transacted by a single official. One cannot well negotiate with a number of people, nor can they jointly manage the same business dealing with efficiency. It is a further advantage in business that one be known for an honorable man, and we find it a specific requirement of the Episkopos that he be held in good repute by those without. The personage in charge of the "temporalities" of the Christian association was the one the Pagans were best acquainted with, the spiritual activities of others escaping their notice, and it was important that he who was in their eyes the representative of the community should bear a character above reproach. Such a character moreover was a protection from measures of repression which might be taken at any moment against associations existing only at the good pleasure of the civil authority. Again, the idea of the unity of the Church, one Church of God embracing all disciples of Christ however widely scattered and separated, was deep rooted in the Christian consciousness, and the sentiment of brotherhood lent a capital importance to the intercourse of church with church. Now that the itinerant prophets and evangelists who had done so much to link the churches in the bond of unity were diminishing in number or deteriorating in character, it could not be left to unauthorised individuals

to carry on the communications between the churches. If it was found preferable to have one negotiator in dealing with the Pagans, still more the close relations of the communities with one another demanded that each should be personified in a single representative, that they might know with whom they had to deal in discussing matters of common interest.

The distinction, then, that appears between the functions of the Presbyter and the Episkopos is roughly speaking that between spiritual and secular. The Presbyters are pastors of the flock; their concern is with morals and religion, with the inner Christian life, and they form the governing council of the community because it is essentially a religious community founded on the faith in Christ. The Episkopos deals rather with the outer life of the society; he is charged with the care of its material interests, with the maintenance of order and the observance of the rules, and these powers of administration and discipline lead him to become the representative of the community in its external relations. The function that was common to bishops and presbyters and seems to render them indistinguishable is precisely the one which originally belonged to neither. It was inevitable that the ministry of preaching and teaching, one of capital importance in a society devoted to the spiritual life, should be assumed by the church officials as soon as the ecclesiastical organisation acquired a certain solidity, whether the charismatic prophets and teachers were becoming fewer, as in the more remote communities of Syria, or whether on the other hand they were too numerous and their rampant individualism embarrassing to the conductors of a regular government. The difference between the offices of presbyter and bishop probably entailed a difference in the character of their teaching. That of the spiritual counsellors would be moral and

practical, a regular and continuous religious instruction; that of the guardian of discipline would be occasional, as he was called upon to oppose teachings at variance with the apostolic tradition.

Although the episcopate and the presbyterate were from the first two different institutions, they were at this time in close relations. And naturally enough, for a study of Christian origins leads to the conclusion that while in these Asiatic churches the bishop was in theory elected by the community—that is, it was in the power of the assembly to accept or reject the candidate nominated by the presbyteral council—practically the presbyters controlled the election of the bishop, who was in most cases one of themselves. Bishops and Presbyters, then, are the ecclesiastical authorities the Pastorals bring to our notice; of the more humble but not less useful ministers it is unnecessary to speak at length. The Deacons and Deaconesses were agents of the Bishop and assistants of the Presbyters. In their constant relations with the members of the church individually, they were intermediaries between them and the higher officers, and it was their special service to care for the poor, the sick, the orphans, all who had need of sympathy and aid, material or moral.

The Pastorals witness to an ecclesiastical development that has made rapid strides since the days of the Apostle Paul.

These writings bring before our eyes that great transformation in Christendom, the last result of which was the Catholic Church. They show us how under the perplexing influence of suspicious phases of Hellenism the need arose for stricter organisation of the Christian communities, for closer adherence to the authorities of the past, for the creation of living authorities which should represent these. They show us how the purely religious interest gradually fell into

the background compared with doctrinal interests, and how in the place of living spiritual forces now appeared ordinances, offices, regulations.<sup>1</sup>

In the view of Baron Von Soden such documents as these cannot be of early date, and First Timothy at least must be assigned to the second or third decade of the second century. It must be remembered however that the movement toward Catholicism did not proceed everywhere at an even rate of progress, but varied with varying conditions, and in these important churches of Hellenic Asia which the Pastorals have in view conditions were such that their organisation was more advanced than that which obtained elsewhere. Moreover, what the Pastorals contain are the instructions and exhortations the Apostle is supposed to give his deputies to prepare them for their mission to the churches. The governmental and administrative system which the author depicts may represent, as I have remarked above, an ideal to realise rather than the real situation. But it matters little whether the ecclesiastical constitution of the Pastorals existed in the first years of the century or came into existence some years later. If these are not present conditions they are those of the near future; the advocate of ecclesiastical principles might be sure of the early triumph of his cause. And so these principles took root in the soil where Paul had so laboriously sown the seeds of religious freedom and individualism. Losing faith in the intrinsic power of truth, it seemed to his degenerate disciples that the safety of the Pauline gospel demanded the establishment of a strong ecclesiastical authority. Their success is easily explained. Enthusiasm has little need of official regulations and external ordinances, and it is only with the waning of enthusiasm that these gain power and multiply.

<sup>1</sup> Von Soden, *op. cit.*, 323.



“Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty,” and when the sense of inspiration by that spirit grew faint men lost the courage of their faith in the spirit of man; they began to distrust themselves, their confident ardor in the pursuit of the ideal began to cool, and they were ready to surrender their religious life to the direction of others.

*c. The Rise of the Hierarchy*

With the close of the first century, signs of change coming over the Christian communities appear in a stricter exclusiveness toward those without and a more jealous supervision of those within. Gradually faith in Christ is changing from a soul experience to acceptance of a dogmatic creed, and with this it becomes necessary that baptism should be preceded by instruction. It follows that a sharper line of distinction is drawn between believers and unbelievers, baptised and unbaptised, and missionary effort is relaxed in the Christian's anxiety to keep himself unspotted from the world. So too within the churches reliance on personal inspiration disappears and everything is subjected to fixed regulation. The charisma of ruling, it has been said, like an Aaron's rod swallowed up all the others, and the early freedom and spontaneity of life was checked by a disposition to regard the Gospel as a new law administered by a governing class.

In the Pastoral Epistles, which have been called the preface to the Epistles of Ignatius, we see the bending of the twig. Yet the change that was taking place from the primitive democracy to an oligarchy of spiritual rulers was not everywhere accomplished without exciting opposition. We know of one case, and doubtless one of many, in which the new movement encountered the resistance of the old free spirit that still lived in the communities. In the church of Corinth, where from the first individualism

had claimed freedom for the utterance of religious feeling, the attempt to enforce strict and unchangeable regulations for the conduct of worship and the celebration of the Eucharist roused a vigorous protest, and the assembly removed the officials, bishops and deacons, who in its judgment had assumed undue authority. This was the incident that called forth a document which throws revealing light on this time of transition, the Epistle of Clement, or the Letter sent by "the church of God which dwells at Rome to the church of God which dwells at Corinth." It is the writer's contention that bishops and deacons are irremovable; their office, conferred by installation, is conferred for life, and the right to exercise its functions is inalienable.<sup>1</sup> He denounces the action of the community, which was well within its ancient powers, as a seditious revolt fomented by ignorant presumptuous agitators, whom he assails with all the epithets which clerical authority holds ready to shower upon any who do not show themselves properly submissive. He summons the Corinthians to repent of their grievous sin and submit themselves to those set over them,—or not to them but to the will of God. For it is the theory of the Epistle that the organisation of the Church was established under inspiration of the Holy Spirit and is of divine authority; hence those who have charge of it and direct its working become representatives and interpreters of the Divine. Thus in this Letter of A.D. 96, or perhaps a few years later, we have not only the first appearance of ecclesiastical law in the assertion of a fixed order in the Church, holding by divine right, but the sacerdotal idea emerges into view, and its maleficent consequent, the

<sup>1</sup> It may be said that Clement admits that the officers only hold during good behavior and are removable for cause, but the admission counts for little. The cause of removal was sufficient in the eyes of the Corinthian church, but its right to be judge in the case is not allowed.

separation of the clergy from the laity, is foreshadowed in that suggestion of the virtual continuance of the Jewish priesthood in the Church which was to furnish the prevailing conception of the Christian ministry. The coming change from the rule of the Spirit to the rule of the bishop appears in the theory of the transmission of office through a chain of commissions which eventually displaced the primitive idea of the ministry as a divine vocation ratified by popular consent. According to Clement, as Christ was sent forth from God, the Apostles were sent by Christ, and going everywhere preaching the word they appointed bishops and deacons in each group of converts for the care of the eucharistic offerings and the conduct of religious services (λειτουργίας). Thus all—Christ, his Apostles and their appointees—come of God in regular order. This doctrine was an ingenious invention, for the only authority recognised in the early Church was the authority of Christ, and the only way to establish a government of men was to assert that this had been established in the beginning by the Apostles under Christ's direction. And it was not a new thing for which men were unprepared, for the Scriptures (Is. lx, 17) had long ago foretold the institution of these church officials. When we find bishops and deacons in the prophecies of Isaiah we cannot reasonably object to their derivation from Apostolic ordination. As to the further succession Clement is not prepared to go the length of his theory. He says the Apostles provided that when the first bishops should fall asleep their place should be filled by others appointed by men of repute with the approval of the whole Church. The doctrine of Apostolic Succession is not mature as yet, but we see that the same principle of apostolicity is about to be claimed in support of hierarchical pretensions which was invoked with equal disregard of historic fact in the case of the Creed and the Canon.

In this Letter, or Treatise, of sixty-five chapters, whose whole purpose is to enforce obedience to ecclesiastical authorities, there is not the most distant allusion to the superiority of the individual episcopate for the maintenance of order in the Church, not the slightest indication of disapproval of the plurality in the community Clement addressed, and no appeal to a different order of things in his own. Yet episcopal monarchy was the institution which more than any other would serve the interest of his cause, and to leave it unmentioned in such a document as this amounts to little less than a formal declaration that it did not yet exist in the church of Rome any more than in that of Corinth.<sup>1</sup> But if the single bishop arrived in the West at a later date than in the East, the Letter witnesses to the early date of the ecclesiastical principles with whose development the Catholic Church took rise. This Letter is in fact the first Catholic document of early Christian literature. And these principles are asserted in a manner even more Roman than Catholic. Never before had one so exalted the authority of church dignitaries or made submission to them the chief virtue of the Christian. Daughter of Jewish sacerdotalism and of ancient Rome, with its instinct of domination, its spirit of discipline, its superstitious respect for ritual and for tradition, the Roman Church revealed in its first utterances the character it had inherited from its spiritual ancestors. Thus ritualism, sacerdotalism, the paramount rule of tradition, ecclesiastical authority founded on the regular succession of leaders of the churches, obedience to them declared the equivalent of obedience to God—all these principles of the Roman Catholic conception of the Church are found in the earliest letter signed by the Church of Rome. How Roman too is this intervention

<sup>1</sup> J. Réville, *Les Origines de l'Épiscopat*, 420-429, where this question is treated at length.

in the internal affairs of another community. What a tone of paternal reproach, revealing the sense of superiority, as of a master calling his pupils to order. From its cradle Christian Rome has drunk the milk of the imperial city and feels itself called to rule the world. The monarchical episcopate may spring up in the East, but it will find in Rome its congenial soil where it will grow till one day it will supplant the Rome of the Cæsars.<sup>1</sup>

It was probably during the sojourn of Trajan at Antioch (114–115) that Ignatius, bishop of the church in that city, was brought before him and condemned to be sent to Rome and given over to the wild beasts in the arena. It is not unlikely that the condemnation was occasioned by the devastating earthquake of the year 115 which proclaimed the wrath of the gods at the toleration of impiety and roused the fury of the people against the Christians. In the course of his protracted journey to the capital Ignatius wrote a number of letters to the churches, the question of whose authenticity has been the theme of a long debate, for they are so extreme in their advocacy of episcopal authority that many scholars are convinced they are pseudepigraphs of the second half of the second century. We could scarcely avoid this conclusion if we accepted the implied premises on which it is based, the assumption of the unity and uniformity of early Christian society, and the regular, even development of ecclesiastical organisation in all the churches. But that cherished fancy is at variance with the facts of history—not less so than the fancied unity of theological ideas in the New Testament, which long ago yielded to the recognition of at least three well-defined types or modes of thought which were called the Petrine, Pauline, and Johanean. In dealing with documents relating to the ecclesiastical situation at the opening of the second century it is impor-

<sup>1</sup> J. Réville, *op. cit.*, 440–441.



tant to note the geographical region whence they proceed. To suppose that the conditions among one group of primitive Christians are those that obtain in another is to shut our eyes to the marked differences which appear between the ideas and institutions of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, of the inheritors of the original Gospel tradition in the Syro-Palestinian regions, of the Pauline communities of Asia Minor and of the church of Rome. It is evident to open eyes that there was no unique type of church government at this time, and that the different forms adopted by the communities did not develop in the same manner. Though the sentiment of ecclesiastical authority nowhere found more emphatic expression than at Rome, it was in the troubled churches of Asia Minor, rent by heretical teaching and party spirit, that intolerant orthodoxy and the individual episcopate first appeared; and to these churches is now addressed a fiery proclamation of the spiritual royalty of the single bishop, to whom the faithful owe blind obedience. It is this in the Ignatian Epistles which, as I have said, has led to the assertion that they are forgeries of a date fifty or sixty years later. It cannot be denied that this is a legitimate hypothesis; it is not only in the Donation of Constantine and the Decretals of Isidor that defenders of ecclesiastical power have shown themselves unscrupulous in their use of forged material to support their claims. And yet I cannot find that the case is made out against the authenticity of these Letters: that is, the Seven of the shorter Greek recension.<sup>1</sup> If we give due weight to the evidence of the Pastorals and the Epistle of Clement touching the ecclesiastical situa-

<sup>1</sup> The three Epistles of the Syriac version are abridgements of this Greek text, and not a translation of an original text less full, as has been maintained. I have no space to argue this point which after all is not of capital importance. The long Greek recension is of the fourth century, later than Eusebius, and the inauthenticity of the other six of its thirteen Epistles is beyond discussion.

tion at the opening of the second century we shall be led to see that the contrast between them and the Ignatian Epistles is after all superficial, and concerns the form rather than the substance of their testimony. While the tone of the former is measured and serious as befits quasi-official documents, the hasty effusions of Ignatius, dispatched during his deportation are the improvisations of an enthusiast, and his excited utterances have not equal importance to the historian with those of his more sober contemporaries.

That Irenæus, Origen, and Lucian, the satirist, were acquainted with these Epistles is not conclusive of Ignatian authorship, for Irenæus, the earliest of the three, was born some years after the martyr's death, but we have the plain statement of his contemporary Polycarp in an epistle to the Philippians that Ignatius wrote a letter to him, and other letters also which he is sending to his correspondents. This seems so nearly decisive of the question that critics who impugn the authenticity of the Ignatian Epistles have found it necessary to maintain that this Epistle of Polycarp is also a forgery whose purpose is to furnish support to the Ignatian forgeries. I cannot go into this question and must be content to say that the attack on the Epistle encounters insuperable obstacles; this writing lends itself very ill to the imputation of forgery, and the entirety of pseudepigraphic literature has no instance of a forger who proceeded as this one must have done. To the direct testimony of Polycarp may be added some considerations in rebuttal of the charge of forgery brought against the Ignatian Epistles. How can it be supposed that in the latter half of the second century an author, imbued with the sentiments expressed in these Letters, should plead so warmly the cause of ecclesiastical discipline and episcopal authority without making the slightest allusion to Montanism, which at this time was creating

such commotion in the churches of Asia and which was directly subversive of all ecclesiastical authority? Or how can it be supposed that this author who, as appears from the Letters, holds all philosophical speculation in horror and is passionately opposed to the gnostic doctrines, should direct all his attack upon Docetism, a primitive form of Gnosticism at this time out of date, and make no mention of the great gnostic systems which were profoundly troubling the churches both of the East and West, nor give any sign of being aware of the existence of Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus, and the rest? Again, it is hard to see why this ardent advocate of episcopacy, anxious to win assent to the extension of episcopal power, should place his writings under the patronage of a Syrian bishop little known and of no great authority, who had never written a line upon the theme this author has so much at heart. It is the way with fabricators of pseud-epigraphs to attribute them to personages who enjoy high prestige and command general respect. Thus the Pastorals appear under the name of St. Paul, and an apocalypse is given out under that of Enoch, Noah or Moses. Why should the writer of the Ignatian Epistles have acted differently? It was not worth while to take a name in vain unless it were to be of some service to him. And the field of choice was open; he had no modern criticism to fear.

The Epistle to the Romans stands apart from the other six Ignatian Letters in respect to its subject matter. There is no exaltation of the monarchical bishop, nor urging of submission to the constituted authorities, because, for one reason, the Roman church had no single bishop and nowhere was a strict ecclesiastical discipline more securely established, and for another reason, because a different subject has possession of the prisoner's mind, one so absorbing that it is no wonder he thinks of little else.

He writes to the Romans of his approaching martyrdom, and anxious not to be deprived of the martyr's crown by their solicitude in his behalf, he begs them to let him die for God. This Letter is so eloquent, so warm with life, that it is hard to believe it a fictitious work, and certain critics gifted with literary tact, notably Renan, exempt it from the condemnation pronounced upon the others. It seems logical that the authenticity of one creates a presumption in favor of the other Letters by the same author, but this these critics are unwilling to acknowledge. They start from the fixed idea that none of the Letters in his name can be attributed to Ignatius, and then they are obliged to admit that exception must be made of the "Romans" because it bears incontestably the stamp of genuineness; but they will not allow the family to benefit by the certificate of orthodoxy they have granted to their sister. If however we take "Romans" to be the only authentic Epistle of the Seven, then it must seem passing strange that one making such exorbitant claims for monarchical episcopacy should attach his arguments and exhortations to the name of a writer who speaks of none other than the plural episcopate and never mentions the bishop of Rome. I cannot dwell upon this point and must leave it with the summary statement that a comparative study of the Epistles should make it clear to an impartial mind that they are all by the same author and inseparable. The position of those who would retain "Romans" and reject the others is untenable.

The only serious argument against the Ignatian Epistles is based upon the ardent "episcopalism" which inspires them throughout and stamps them for *Tendenz Schriften*. It has been said that the plain sign of apocryphal writings is their showing a "tendency," betraying the purpose for which they were composed. It is obvious that the

Ignatian Epistles were written with the intent to fortify episcopal authority in the early churches. Therefore they must be considered apocryphal. This is, logically, the fallacious conversion of A into A:—as, for instance all dogs are animals, therefore all animals are dogs. If it be conceded that all apocryphal writings are tendency writings, it does not follow that all tendency writings are apocryphal. Of all productions of early Christian literature there is none where purpose is more evident than it is in Cyprian's famous treatise *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, but no one dreams of suspecting its authenticity. The essential characteristic of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings is their attributing to some venerated personage of the past whose name lends authority, ideas, principles, interests which the real author is devoted to. What betrays him is the incompatibility of his ideas, etc., with those of the personage whom he substitutes for himself, or his making that personage speak of events or institutions he could have no knowledge of because they belong to a later epoch. In the present case the question is whether the principles of the author regarding the episcopal office are in fact incompatible with the conditions existent in the Asiatic churches in the time of Ignatius. On a careful study of these conditions, this incompatibility which has been assumed *a priori* tends to disappear.

At this date the episcopate was an institution of long standing in the Christian communities, and in certain churches of Asia the régime of a single bishop had succeeded to that of the plurality which obtained elsewhere. We have noted in the preceding section the successive steps by which the bishop rose to a position of high authority. At first he was an official in charge of the financial affairs of the community. These embraced the administration of the poor fund, and since charity to the needy filled so large a place in church life, this



office of chief almoner became one of a dignity commensurate with its responsibility. At the celebration of the Eucharist the offerings were presented to the bishop and it was he who presided at this memorial meal. It may be from following the practice of the Greek associations, where the Episkopos took the leading part in the religious rites, or from the close connection in the minds of the early Christians between service to fellow-men and the worship of God, but however it came about, we find that bishops and deacons were the regular ministrants at the Lord's Supper. The Epistle of Clement tells us that such was the case at Corinth. The power to maintain order in the community and to repress any disturbance of brotherly unity also fell to the bishop, and since in the Asiatic churches such disturbances were occasioned by the promulgation of strange doctrines affecting faith and practice, he was called upon to define and uphold the traditional teaching and to pronounce with authority concerning Christian truth. It brought a further accession to the prestige of the bishop when to him the function was assigned of representing the church in its external relations—its intercourse with sister churches and its dealing with pagan citizens of the community wherein it dwelt.

Such was the position of the bishop in the early years of the second century. Insensibly, as it seems, he had gathered into his hands a great and growing power, and there is nothing to render it improbable that a fiery partisan of episcopal supremacy should write these Letters commending it to the churches as a panacea for all their ills. In cities like Ephesus, Smyrna, Philadelphia, on the high road between East and West, where Asiatic myths and rituals encountered the rationalism and "sophistry" of the Greeks, these warring influences, together with that of Docetism on the one hand and of Judaic traditions

on the other, were rending the churches into discordant factions. In the eyes of Ignatius it has become the one imperative urgency for the members of a church to be united, and to maintain the ecclesiastical unity which is the outward sign of unity in the spirit. The disseminators of false doctrine and the schismatics and heretics, their converts, he assails with furious denunciation, and would have them looked upon as wild beasts or mad dogs. Division, he insists, is the root of all evil, and then comes the prophylactic: it is to rally around the bishop in each community. The bishop is the representative of that ecclesiastical unity which to Ignatius is of prime importance; he is its embodiment and personification. In these churches of Asia simple Christians were facing the same questions which had arisen elsewhere, but for them had become more difficult and troubling. Amidst all the different doctrines and practices commended for acceptance by all sorts of persons who claimed divine inspiration or superior knowledge or possession of authoritative tradition, how was one to know what to believe, what to do, whom to follow? Doubtless there was but one Christ, but one Gospel, and there ought to be but one Church, but how was the unity of Christian faith and life to be attained? The *Didache* replied: Judge prophets by their works; if their conduct conforms to the moral precepts of the Lord as we have received them, they are worthy of deference. Here the rule or standard, conformity to which brings unity, is the teaching of Jesus himself, the Galilean Gospel. The *Pastorals* replied: Hold to the sound doctrine transmitted by Paul to his associates and by them to the elders and the bishop. Here the standard is the Pauline doctrinal tradition. The *Epistle of Clement* replied: Submit yourselves to the heads of the church, have done with discussions and individual inspirations, and keep faithfully to the pre-

scribed religious observances under the direction of your elders and bishops, for their authority derives from the Apostles and from Christ. Here the standard is the ritual tradition ascending to the Levitical Law and transmitted from the elder dispensation. Ignatius, who is neither theologian nor traditionalist, goes straight to the one idea of his narrow mind and replies: Cling to the bishop; he is the living unity of the church. This is a plain counsel, easy to understand, and hard to gainsay. It is not for Christians individually to decide upon the claims of rival teachings; that is the business of the bishop. It is he who teaches the true doctrine, enforces wholesome discipline, directs the true Christian worship, and the first duty of the soldier, Ignatius tells his readers, is to follow his commanding officer without question. The orthodoxy of the Pastorals has led by a short path to the episcopalism of Ignatius. It is advocated with all the ardor of his soul and an extravagance of language all his own:

Let nothing be done without the bishop; so you shall do all *in* security. . . . Whatever the bishop approves of, that is pleasing to God. Hold to the bishop that God may hold to you. . . . To do anything without the bishop is to serve the devil. . . . To obey the bishop is to obey the Father of Jesus Christ, the universal Bishop. . . . Bishops are in the counsels of Jesus Christ, therefore one must conform to the counsel of his bishop. . . . Ye are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ. . . . Reverence the bishop as the Lord himself.

The next age saw this episcopal supremacy an established fact. The first duty of the Christian was obedience to the bishop; that is, the individual was completely subjected to a hierarchy, and with this, as Wernle says, "we have gone back again to where Jesus began." The Letter to Polycarp forms a counterpart to those sent

to the churches, and in place of exhortations to the faithful we have counsels addressed to the bishop. Polycarp is urged to show an equal concern for spiritual as for material things, for Ignatius holds that the bishop has taken on the special function of the presbyters, the cure of souls, and become a moral counsellor, a director of conscience,—a step that followed naturally from his position as guardian of discipline and oracle of doctrinal truth. There also appears a principle, to be established after long conflict, when Ignatius lays it down that the bishop is possessor par excellence of the spirit of God and Christ, and the grace bestowed upon him in his official capacity is something of a higher order than any inspiration or spiritual gifts of individuals.

The picture of the Ignatian bishop in these Letters seems overcoloured and out of keeping with their early date, yet they contain admissions which show that church government as Ignatius conceives it is far from being an episcopal autocracy. The claims he urges for episcopal supremacy are not so much claims for the bishop personally as for the ecclesiastical authority of which the bishop is the representative. Thus the exercise of discipline is not a personal power. Heretics are (to be treated as) wild beasts, but it is not said that the bishop can expel them of his own authority; he is not yet in possession of the means of action which absolutism requires. For another thing, we do not find that presbyters are eliminated from the government of the church. The Presbyterial College is compared with the Council of the Apostles, and if presbyters ought to give an example of submission to the bishop by subordinating their preferences to his, that is not the obedience of inferior to superior, but the preservation of the close accord that should subsist between the Council of the church and its executive head. Nor is the community without a voice in its affairs, and among them

the election of the bishop. These Letters of Ignatius are addressed to the churches, not to their bishops, and the brethren who meet him on his arrival at Smyrna are delegates sent by their respective communities. Furthermore, in weighing the testimony of the Ignatian Epistles to the condition of the Asiatic churches at this time we must not lose sight of the temperament of the writer. Ardent and impassioned, Ignatius sees things through his imagination, as he would have them to be rather than as they really are. The same enthusiasm that prompts his eager aspiration to martyrdom inspires the exaltation of episcopal power which has become for him the one thing needful; and the circumstances under which the Letters were written, their unmeasured language, do not allow us to accept them as depicting the reality of the existing church organisation. If Ignatius insists so violently on the bishop's supremacy, it is because it is not yet a fact. If he takes such pains to persuade his readers that complete submission to the bishop is the only way of salvation, it is plain that they are not convinced of that truth nor aware of their duty. One does not beat so loud upon open doors.

It is important for the date and genuineness of the Ignatian Letters that the episcopate they treat of is a purely local office and confers no authority upon its possessor outside of his own community. The churches they address are autonomous communities; Christ is the universal Bishop and each local bishop His agent or organ. The Catholic Church is still a unity spiritual and invisible, as in the mind of Paul, and the Catholic Episcopate which a later time was to make a reality far exceeding the ideal of Ignatius lies quite beyond the horizon of his vision. While he accumulates all the arguments that make episcopal power the anchor of safety for Christians, he breathes no word of Catholic authority, or sacramental



prerogative, or the apostolic institution of the episcopate, or the theory of Apostolic Succession. Obviously it is because he is ignorant of these developments that he does not speak of them.

We are led to conclude from these Letters that they present to us much that is theoretical rather than actual, but this first manifesto in favor of the monarchical episcopacy that was in a state of becoming opens a new chapter in church history, the record of the struggle of that institution to establish itself in the other regions of Christendom and to overcome the resistance which the old Christian spirit of liberty, of individual inspiration, of direct communion with the Divine, opposed to the tyranny of ecclesiastical authority over the Christian's thought and life. The constitutive principle and the essential machinery of the later Episcopal domination already existed at the opening of the second century in those regions of which Mommsen writes: "Asia Minor was an old land of subjection, accustomed to a despotic régime alike under Greek and Persian overlords." But, as I have said, it was when transplanted to Rome, to that incomparable school in the art of governing men whence the Catholic Church drew the guiding principles of its organisation, that the monarchical episcopate became an overshadowing power.

It seemed desirable to sketch in some detail the initial stages of the movement that led from the theocratic democracy of the primitive Christian communities to the hierarchical constitution of the Catholic Church; but its after development need not be closely followed. To vary the saying, it is the first step that counts. The seed has been sown and the plant already shows itself above the ground; only time is needed to bring it to maturity.

That the bishop had charge of the worship of the church

and above all presided at the Lord's Supper had much to do with his elevation above the presbyters. In the early time while the Eucharist was still an Agape, or evening meal in commemoration of the last supper of Jesus and his disciples, the congregation sat down at the table and one presided who offered the eucharistic prayer. When the participants grew too large in number for all to be seated at a common table, sitting became a mark of honor; the "laity" had to stand, while the presbyters were invited to sit with the bishop at his table. Thus a picture or dramatisation of the last supper was offered to the imagination, the bishop symbolising Christ and the Presbyters on either side the Apostles. Probably this picture was in the mind of Ignatius when he assigned the place of Christ to the bishop and that of the Apostles to the Presbyters. In Alexandria the reproduction was the more exact since there were just twelve Presbyters in that church down to the middle of the third century. As time advanced it brought further changes. The Eucharist was separated from the Agape, with which it had been identified, and its celebration was transferred from the evening to the morning. As a distinct rite it gained a new solemnity and a higher place in men's reverence, and with the advent of the sacramental idea the ascendancy of the bishop, its celebrant, grew more pronounced.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the public worship of the assembly, which at first had been open to all who would take part in it, was becoming settled in a fixed form and conducted by the bishop, upon whom the service of the Word especially devolved. And this from the necessity of doctrinal uniformity which more than all else brought about the supremacy of the bishop in the West as in the East. By the middle of the second century Gnosticism had become a formidable menace to the faith of the Church

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *Christian Institutions*, 82-84.

and it claimed the authorisation of Scripture—that is, of writings that passed under the name of the Twelve Apostles to whom the mysteries of the faith had been confided by the Master. The Church accepted the principle of apostolic authority and its restricted application, and so the first order of spiritual leaders in Paul's enumeration—apostles, prophets, teachers—passed away. With one exception the greater apostolate was ignored or forgotten, and the founding of all the churches and their instruction in the faith were attributed to the Twelve and their coadjutor, St. Paul. Upon this assumed fact the Church took its stand, and henceforth the authority of the Apostles as divine and infallible grew stronger in the Christian imagination. But amidst the voluminous letters in circulation what were the authentic apostolic writings to which appeal must be made, and how determine their true significance while the current free and easy methods of interpretation could make Scripture witness to any wildest theosophic speculation? Search for an answer to these vital questions led to the further aggrandizement of the episcopal office. The bishop in each community was looked to as the voucher for the apostolic tradition, and for the genuineness of apostolic writings. The Apostles must have provided for the preservation of their teachings, and to this end it was plain that they had appointed a bishop in every church they planted to receive their instructions and transmit them to his successor.<sup>1</sup> Thus the short summaries of belief, the defence of the Church against gnostic error, were traced to an apostolic origin and invested with divine authority.

<sup>1</sup> "How inevitable was the thought of succession in connection with a deposit of doctrine is shown by the Pastoral Epistles—e.g. II Tim. ii, 2 . . . and the fact that very soon it was applied exclusively to the bishops is only a special case in the general development of the episcopate which vanquishes all other rivals." Harnack, *Constitution and the Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, 123-124.

There was no need of historical research into the Christian past, nor of scholarship to examine its literature: "What was needed was one trustworthy man in each community of Christians who could certify that the faith, as incorporated in some form of sound words, had been received by him from his predecessor in office."<sup>1</sup> This man displaced the ancient presbyter. Originally the presbyters were regarded as the conservators and transmitters of apostolic tradition, and we learn from a well-known passage that Papias, who lived until about 160, still resorted to presbyters as the highest source of information concerning the primitive faith. For the elders he consulted gave heart and mind to their task, held anxious communion with one another and with survivors of an earlier generation, and treasured in memory the sayings and doings, the facts and teachings which had come down from the beginning. But if the early witnesses to the tradition could speak with authority, testimony at third or fourth hand carried less weight, and their declining prestige left the presbyters powerless to withstand the transference of their distinctive function to the omnivorous bishop. With this the deliverance of religious truth, no longer dependent upon what we may call the religious qualifications of the witness (as Irenæus' fine letter to Florinus intimates), became the official act of an administrator of ecclesiastical affairs.

Irenæus, who began by asserting that Christian truth was to be ascertained and verified through the tradition of the presbyters, was led finally to insist upon the episcopate as defender of the faith and the bulwark of the Church against the false teachings of the Gnostics. He gives us the first definite statement of the doctrine of Apostolic Succession.<sup>2</sup> The standard of Christian doctrine, he

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *op. cit.*, 90.

<sup>2</sup> It was a tenet of the Jewish doctors that a succession of Rabbis from

maintained, was the common belief of the Christian churches, in all essentials the same, and this was the belief taught by the Apostles. To this Catholic and Apostolic Faith all theological opinions were to be referred, and such as did not conform to it were thereby discredited and shown to be "heretical," or merely the arbitrary opinions of a sect. The custodians of this faith were the bishops of the several churches to whom it had been transmitted through a chain of succession from the Apostles themselves. The latter Irenæus compares to men who have deposited money for charitable purposes in a bank of which the bishop is cashier. The Apostles, that is, had carefully instructed their successors, the bishops they appointed, and these in turn had passed on to their successors the teaching they had received. This, we may note, was to overlook the fact that in the view of the first Christians the Apostles were not to have any successors, for the simple reason that the day of the Lord was near and the end of all things was at hand. Irenæus tells us that since it would be very tedious to reckon up the succession in all the churches it will be enough for him to trace the one that is to be found in the church which holds "pre-eminent authority." So then, Peter and Paul, having founded and organised the church of Rome, appointed one Linus their successor and gave into his hands the office of the episcopate, which came next to Anacletus and after him to Clement, and so through the succession of bishops the apostolic faith has come down to the time of Irenæus.

Tertullian somewhat later further expounds the new doctrine. In obedience to the command of the risen Christ who sent them to teach and to baptise all nations,

---

Moses down had handed on through the generations the deposit of revealed truth, and consciously or unconsciously the Church adapted this theory to its own use.



the Twelve went forth into the world and founded churches in every city, from which all other churches have derived the tradition of the faith. The registers of the apostolic churches show that their first bishop had for his predecessor some one of the Apostles. Thus the church of Rome records that Clement was ordained by Peter to receive and transmit the true faith. We note that this account of the Roman succession differs from that of Irenæus, but since both are equally groundless the difference is not important. There is abundant evidence to the fact that the single bishop did not arrive in the church of Rome until after the year 115; it is highly improbable that Peter ever set foot in the imperial city, and Paul wrote his Letter to an existing Roman church which he had never seen. If facts could have asserted themselves against the advocates of the principle of apostolicity it would have been awkward for the pretensions of the *ecclesia urbis* that in the restricted application now given to the term apostolic it was not an apostolic foundation at all. As it was, nothing could be neater and completer than this theoretical construction of episcopal succession from the Twelve Apostles with facts ready made to suit.

As guardian of the faith the bishop now assumed complete control of the teaching office. The *charisma veritatis* which according to St. Paul belonged to all Christians who were filled with the Spirit, became exclusively his endowment, and when no one was allowed to speak to the congregation except by his permission the ancient freedom of all to participate in the "service of the word" was at an end. The people were taught that they had no right to opinions of their own—something incompatible with the obtuse intellectual condition required for the purposes of hierarchical absolutism; they were to avoid "vain babblings" and confine themselves to "walking worthily," lest they come to adopt ideas at variance

with the teaching of the Church. From its origin the episcopate showed itself the adversary of free thought, and unity of belief was secured by the simple method of suppressing all dissidents, who were violently accused of all manner of immorality.

And as the gnostic controversy had invested the successor of the Apostles with the prerogative of the Teacher of old days, so the Montanist reaction conferred on him the inspiration of the Prophet, and with the passing of this second order of spiritual leaders of the early Church, once held in the highest honor, the bishop now took over the functions of all the three. The spiritual office of prophecy, which from its liability to extravagance had given Paul some trouble, was more and more felt to be an inconvenience as time went on. The prophets were looked upon as a disturbing element by the church authorities who labored to promote unity in the congregation and the orderly conduct of affairs, and that they were becoming fewer and less influential was not unpleasing to the bishop who was naturally conservative and whose first care as head of the community was the welfare of the whole, not the irregular aspirations of a few. It lay in the nature of his office that the church tended to become a corporate institution with individual life merged in the general life and individual interests subordinated or suppressed. Then too the prophet was likely to make trouble for the church in its relation to the pagan neighborhood. The inspired enthusiasm which found vent in the condemnation of evil practices, or the bold utterance of unpalatable truths, was far from helpful to the church officials who were striving to conciliate the opposition and gain the good will of the people among whom they dwelt. To this end it was requisite that the bishop should be *persona grata* to them that were without; not a radical doctrinaire, but a sagacious opportunist able to commend

the faith to all classes with sympathetic persuasiveness, and by methods of adaptation and assimilation to further the growth of the Christian Church in the world.

Montanism, which originated in Phrygia, the old land of the "possessed," was a wide-spread movement to revive the spirit of prophecy in protest against the ecclesiastical secularism and the neglect of the true Christian aim, the religious edification of the individual soul. The Montanists would make no terms with the world; they would keep the Church pure even if that were to keep it small; and within the Church they claimed the freedom of the human spirit and its right to the fullest development, its open vision of divine truth through immediate communion with the Spirit of God, its only guide and stay. It was this that appealed to the soul of Tertullian and led that champion of Catholicity to join the ranks of the Montanists. What they sought was a return to the faith and feeling of the early Church, and their views of the religious life could only seem an extravagant novelty to those who had travelled far from the ancient ways. None the less their exaltation of sentiment was no more compatible with the conventional moderation and ordered rule essential to the hierarchy than was the unbridled speculation of the Gnostics, nor could the independent appropriation of special gifts by individual laymen be allowed by an ecclesiastical organisation claiming spiritual authority in its corporate capacity alone.

Montanism raised the issue between the religion of the spirit and the religion of authority—to use Sabatier's phrase,—which is still a living issue in our time. "It was a beating of the wings of pietism against the iron bars of organisation. It was the first, though not the last, rebellion of the religious sentiment against official religion."<sup>1</sup> But even if these recalcitrants had not been

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *The Organisation of the early Christian Churches*, 125.

hampered by their primitive conception of prophecy as a divine possession, they could not have made head against the tidal movement which was making for the establishment of the Catholic Church, as it was now beginning to be called. Nevertheless, whether they would regard it as a moral victory or an added mortification, the clever ecclesiastics paid them the ironical compliment of "stealing their thunder." That inspiration by the Holy Ghost which Montanism claimed for the prophet the Church appropriated as the special perquisite of the episcopate. It met the revolt of prophetic enthusiasm by proclaiming every bishop to be a prophet. In the older view the gift of the Spirit was the pre-condition that qualified one for appointment to the ministry and witnessed to his divine call. Now it was held that the gift attached to the office and was received by the bishop at his ordination. The original Christian inspiration was quenched or swallowed up in the episcopate. The Holy Spirit was not present and active in the congregation at large; inspiration was not given to every follower of Christ with the freedom of the wind that bloweth where it listeth; it was the prerogative of the bishop alone. Tied to an ecclesiastical office, and obedient to the magical mechanism of a formal rite, it passed by physical contact in the laying on of hands. And what the bishop received he had the power to bestow: "through him exclusively did it please the Holy Spirit to enter into the souls of individuals at confirmation or of church officers at ordination."<sup>1</sup> This matter of ordination, however, was later on to become a burning question, when as the ministry was changing to a priesthood it came to be regarded as the authorisation to conduct the ritual.

About the middle of the second century we find estab-

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *op. cit.*, 108. For some evils resulting from the suppression of Montanism see Allen, *Christian Institutions*, 104-105.

lished in all the churches a central government under a single chief. Referring to this period Harnack writes: "It is superfluous and indeed impossible to enumerate the rights and powers of the bishop, since in a sense they are limitless." As yet however this omnipotent bishop was only the head of a local church, but when in the greater cities the single community was becoming inconveniently numerous and the adjacent rural districts becoming crowded with sheep having no shepherd, the needs of the occasion were met by detaching presbyters from the bishop's council to form new congregations and take charge of them as delegates of the bishop and in subordination to his authority. In this way the movement started whereby in course of time the congregational system of autonomous churches gave place to the diocesan system in which all the churches of a given district were subject to the rule of a single bishop. The change was not made all at once, however, and in smaller places the bishop retained his original position. The new system effected an interchange of original functions: as the bishop had taken over that of the presbyter in becoming trustee of the tradition, so now to the presbyter is given the conduct of worship and the power to celebrate the Eucharist which had belonged to the bishop alone. This was the first step on the road by which the presbyter passed into the priest. As pastor of a local church the presbyter stood in the place of the earlier bishop, and he was disposed to magnify his office. For a generation the peace of the Church was disturbed by the rivalries and contentions between presbyters claiming independence and bishops insisting on their subjection.

The champion of episcopal prerogative was Cyprian of Carthage, "the embodiment of the Roman genius of administration," as he has been called. To such a mind the principles of Church order were plain and indisputable.



Christ's God-given authority he had committed to the Apostles and they in turn to the bishops in succession. Any authority of presbyters to minister in the Church they must derive from its only source, the episcopate. This seems conclusive. And it goes without saying that the congregation has no power to appoint its officers; its part is limited to expressing approval of the appointment. Cyprian also lays down the rule for the ordination of a bishop which became prevalent in the Catholic Church. It is the practice, he says, "delivered from divine tradition and apostolic observance," that all the bishops of the province should assemble to ordain the new minister of their order in the presence of the people given to his charge. This is the only valid ordination, because the bishop's office must come to him from those who hold it and have power to confer it—those to whom it has been transmitted through the succession of bishops from the Apostles who received it from Christ. In ordaining a presbyter, on the other hand, the bishops do not transmit the whole of their authority, but only enough for the purpose of his office. The presbyter is given the right to perform certain specified ecclesiastical acts and no others. Thus a presbyter cannot ordain a presbyter, because the power of ordination is one of the reserved powers of the episcopate. So then the ministry is no longer representative of the people, but its authority is derived from a source beyond and above them. The bishop holds his office by divine right, and no longer in virtue of a divine call evidenced by practical results and ratified by the congregation. He is appointed by God and responsible only to God. And his unlimited power over his helpless flock appears in his claim of the divine right of doing wrong when early in the third century Callistus of Rome declares that not even for deadly sin might a community venture to remove its bishop. 'Time was when upon his

committing sin the bishop's tenure of office would have lapsed of itself, for the chief witness to his call to the ministry was the moral character shown in a blameless life. Now his office is sacrosanct; his personal sins are not reviewable by men, nor do they vitiate his service in the things of God.<sup>1</sup> When Cyprian declared "The Church is in the bishop, and if one is not with the bishop he is not in the Church," the contention of Ignatius that bishops are the visible representatives of the divine immanence in the churches, so that adhesion to the bishop is essential to being a Christian, had passed from the realm of theory to matter of fact, and the bishop could say without hyperbole, *L'Eglise c'est moi*. The episcopate was not the roof and spire, but the foundation of the edifice; not a development within the Church to meet certain emergencies, but the primary condition of its existence, ordained from the beginning by the divine will.

It was natural that bishops in the greater cities of the Empire, such as Antioch, Alexandria and above all in Rome, should assume a certain pre-eminence over the bishops of smaller churches in remote localities who had not acquired diocesan jurisdiction. This relative importance of episcopal sees gave rise to the metropolitan, the presiding bishop of a province, who exercised a control over the action of local bishops. And as the upper grades of the hierarchy rose, the lower fell. A little later it was decreed that the smaller bishoprics should be suppressed in places where a presbyter could serve as well, in order that the episcopal dignity should not be held cheap from the number of those who possessed it. This dignified episcopate now acquires solidarity and appears as a self-perpetuating corporation, controlling all ecclesiastical affairs as well as those of a local church. With the substitution of bishops for communities everywhere

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *op. cit.*, 252-254.

complete, the Cyprianic doctrine that the body of bishops constitutes the Church appears as a necessary consequence, and henceforth the unity of the Church consists in the unanimity of the bishops. They act together in Councils from which presbyters and deacons as well as the laity are excluded, and since the gift of the Holy Spirit is their exclusive possession their decisions carry the weight of divine revelation.<sup>1</sup>

And so the Christian universalism, which meant in St. Paul's preaching a religion free to all, was made by the Catholic Church to signify a dominion binding upon all. That the Pauline churches remained without any organisation under official authorities and their only government was that of the spirit was mainly owing to the sentiment that all Christians belonged to the Church as a whole whose sovereign ruler was the Lord Christ, and that the local assembly was but a partial embodiment or manifestation of the One Church. This body of Christ, animated by his Spirit, was not a corporation; it was an ideal Christian unity, not an ecclesiastical institution. This seems the only conception of the Church that accords with the principles of Jesus. When the theory of Clement carried back the gradually developed order of the local communities to an Old Testament prototype and an apostolic institution, then the individual churches began as it were to set up for themselves. Each church which hitherto had felt itself organically one with the greater Church, the whole Brotherhood in Christ throughout the

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *op. cit.*, 129. "If instead of wrangling over disputed questions about which we can know nothing and of which it would not profit us to know everything, ecumenical councils had preached liberty in non-essentials; had rebuked the contentious spirit of theology; had recalled men to the simple revelation of the Gospel; had proclaimed crusades against sensuality, dishonesty, cruelty, oppression; had striven to purify and develop the Christian ideal of character, the face of the world today would be very different from what it is." Tyrrell, *Medievalism*, 75.

world, now became a separate, independent, self-contained entity with a legally constituted organisation and a centralised episcopal government. The Ignatian doctrine that the bishop is the analogue of Christ, the Head of the Church universal, is an assertion of this autonomous individuality whose independence was at its greatest about the year 150. From that time the course of the hierarchical development led to the aggregation of these individual communities and their subordination under the diocesan, provincial and patriarchal constitution of the Catholic Church as it passed successively under conciliar, imperial and papal rule. This universal Church, a positive reality very earthly and not a little sensual and devilish, was something widely different from that spiritual unity of the faithful, the Church of God as it lived in the primitive conception. This latter is the holy Catholic Church to which the Creed refers, a kingdom that "cometh not with observation." That there exists in the world a holy people who lead a life with God is something that can only be believed and cannot be seen; on the other hand, a conspicuous institution organised under official authority is easily visible and cannot be an object of faith.

The essence of Catholicism lies in the refusal to make any distinction between the Church in the religious sense and the Church in the legal sense. The government of the legal Church is the government of Christ, and the life of Christians with God is therefore to be regulated by the Catholic ecclesiastical law. From this all the rest follows. . . . The rise of ecclesiastical law and the constitution of the Church are an apostasy from the conditions intended by Jesus himself and at first realised in the primitive Christian communities.<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that the Church is not sufficiently described as the invisible body of Christ, for it is an es-

<sup>1</sup> R. Sohm, *The Nature and Origin of Catholicism*.

sential part of its nature that it should take the form of a society, a social life. The social and corporate element cannot be sundered from the conception of the Church. And the public life of a visible society of men cannot dispense with some kind of form. There is need of some generally received order, which arising in the past controls the present, so that in case of divergencies within the society the fact of agreement with this traditional order decides the issue. This seems to ignore the fact that society, social life, and public law already exist. Human life is a life of social relations. The Gospel does not call men into a special society ruled by special law; it reveals the principles that should guide the daily life of the world, principles of personal and social living based on men's relation to God and their relations to one another as involved in the common relation to God. Jesus would make religion one with life. He would show men how to live the common life in love and joy, in trustful dependence on the All-Father. And this was shown them in the life he lived himself, and the witnesses went forth to spread abroad the knowledge of that life and the practice of it. It does not appear that Jesus saw the need of a separate society of men exclusively devoted to religion over against the irreligious world outside their society.

To return: the Cyprianic idea of the Church implied its independence of the State, and the attempt to found an *imperium in imperio* incited severe measures on the part of the secular power for the suppression of the Catholic Church throughout the Empire. But the failure of Decius and later of Diocletian to stamp out Christianity by physical force taught Constantine another policy, and the State finally took over the Church it could not subdue.<sup>1</sup> One result

<sup>1</sup> "Ce que surtout avait séduit son esprit administratif c'était cette constitution épiscopale qui résumait le corps immense de la chrétienté dans quelques centaines d'évêques, groupés eux-mêmes autour de cinq ou



of the Decian persecution was to invest the bishops with new powers of discipline, under which the forgiveness of sin became a formal judicial function. When the storm burst upon the Church many unheroic Christians hastened to seek safety in the profession of the State religion, but after it subsided the "Lapsed," as they were called, desired to rejoin their churches, and Christian charity showed itself eager to welcome the return of the strayed sheep. The confessors who had suffered for the faith, exercising the old prerogative of Christians to forgive one another's sins, gave them certificates of absolution, on the strength of which they were restored to good standing. To some it seemed that this easy indulgence was dissolving moral standards in a flood of sentimentalism. There were others who perceived that a universal institution could not be a community of perfect saints. If her doors were opened to all men her moral severity must relax, and the Church be likened to a dragnet which gathers of all kinds, good and bad. The issue was decided by resort to the familiar method of meeting difficulties. The rule was adopted that no action should be taken in the cases of the Lapsed without the approval of the bishop, and soon it became established that bishops were "judges in Christ's stead," that the right of readmitting penitents and the general powers of absolution and excommunications were inherent in the episcopate.

A dispute that grew out of the controversy concerning the Lapsed resulted in the declaration that a new Church could not be established beside an existing one in the

---

six membres éminents de l'épiscopat, de sorte que celui qui saurait dominer ces derniers serait le maître de tout le reste. . . . L'épiscopat fut ébloui, fasciné. Sortant d'une position précaire, la veille encore mis hors la loi, il devenait subitement l'objet des gracieusetés impériales. Il donna, les yeux fermés, dans le piège." A Réville, *Histoire du Dogme de la Divinité de Jésus Christ*, 73.

same city—that is, that the right of free association no longer existed for Christians. When on the return of peace to the Church Cornelius became bishop of Rome, the party of uncompromising severity, dissatisfied with his lax views, procured the ordination of their leader Novatian for their bishop. Cyprian vigorously contended that the election was null, and through his influence the principle finally prevailed that as there is one God and one Christ so there could be in each city but one episcopal community, and any attempt to elect another bishop for a separate community should be banned with the name schism.

We come finally to the line of “development” which is not only a wide departure from primitive Christianity but a return to the religions of pre-Christian and pre-historic times. According to Harnack we find that about the year 180 the distinction between clergy and laity has become firmly established in the Church.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier time there was no such distinction, or rather no clergy, strictly speaking, existed. The internal division of the Christian community into active and passive, teachers and taught, rulers and ruled, was as yet undreamed of. The powers of Church officers pertained to matters of administration, of general superintendence and control, but in all that concerned the spiritual life all members of the community stood on an equal footing. Even after the officers had begun to assume liturgical functions it was not conceded that they had an exclusive right to their performance. In the regular order they administered the rite of baptism, but any member of the Church was competent to baptise. The Eucharist could be celebrated in any meeting of Christians without the presence of a Church officer, and that this was an existing custom appears from the effort of Ignatius to change it when he

<sup>1</sup> *Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, 114.

writes in mild remonstrance: "Let that be deemed a valid Eucharist at which the bishop presides." This democratic equality survived from apostolic days when the distinction between Christians had regard to the variety of spiritual gifts. The charisma was something personal; it did not distinguish a class from a class, but one Christian from another. Montanism was the attempt to reassert this charismatic freedom against official rule, and Tertullian vigorously maintained that office in the Church did not confer any powers not possessed by all its members. During the last half of the second century the original conception of ecclesiastical office gradually passed away and a different one grew up to supplant it which reached its full development under the influence of Cyprian. To him was owing a new view of Apostolic Succession in respect to its principle or motive. In the preceding century the assertion was that the Apostles had imparted to their successors a teaching received from Christ, and through the line of bishops the maintenance of this apostolic teaching was secured. It was a theory suited to the times, but now that the struggle with Gnosticism was a memory and the Canon of Scripture was in process of formation, the doctrinal tradition no longer held the place of first importance, and the Apostolic Succession could be made to serve another purpose. The perpetuation of infallible teachers became the perpetuation of a priesthood empowered to offer sacrifice by an alleged commission of Christ to the Apostles and their successors. If outside of the Church there is no salvation, it is mainly because the Episcopate which constitutes the Church is the depositary of sacerdotal gifts and powers, and in its hands are the essential means of grace. This new gospel of salvation by bishops followed upon the gradual conversion of the Eucharist into a sacrifice and the Christian ministry into a mediating priesthood—bishops and

those holding of bishops. The priest represents men to God and God to men, and it is only through him as intermediary that laymen have access to the Divine. An early writer<sup>1</sup> addresses his Christian readers as a holy priesthood for the offering of spiritual sacrifice, and frequently in the New Testament we find the name of sacrifice given metaphorically to such acts of devotion as almsgiving, prayer and praise. The Epistle to the Hebrews carries imagery so far as to speak of an altar having place in the spiritual service of the churches. The use of metaphor always carries the danger of its becoming literalised, a danger the Church did not escape when it spread among the Pagans, long familiar with the ritual of sacrifice. It was natural that the metaphor should acquire a special reference to the Eucharist, with its alms and prayers and thanksgivings, even before the bread and wine were thought of as an offering of the body and blood of Christ by the priest alone. The trend to sacerdotalism had indeed been held in check by the strong feeling of the universal priesthood of all Christians, and if the minister was called a priest it was only because he was the representative of a "sacerdotal race" as Origen called the Christians; he was a priest only in the sense in which every member of the congregation was a priest. Still any use of this term as a designation of the Christian ministry could not be divested of its accepted significance, could not but tend toward the view of the ministry as a priesthood in the exclusive sense and after the ancient type. The sacerdotal principles of the Catholic Church, it should be understood, are not so much a corruption or degeneration of original Christianity as the conquest over it by religious ideas as old as humanity.<sup>2</sup> The Church

<sup>1</sup> I Peter ii, 5.

<sup>2</sup> For an admirable sketch of the history of Sacrifice and Priesthood see A. Réville, *Prolegomènes de l'Histoire des Religions*. Pt. ii, chaps. iii and iv.

might claim for its priesthood a Judaic ancestry, but a nearer derivation or closer analogy may be found in the contemporary Asiatic cults where the Mysteries were under the control of priests who could admit or exclude the votaries of Isis and Cybele and Mithra. Under existing conditions Cyprian had little difficulty in enforcing the sacerdotal claims. In the celebration of the Eucharist the act of the whole congregation became the act of the bishop's delegate, commissioned through divine agencies in which the people had no part, and the former status of the officiating minister as the people's agent exercising powers belonging to themselves, was a thing of the forgotten past. The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, once the free expression of the Christian heart, has now become a sacramental mystery which laymen individually or as a congregation are incompetent to administer. So rapid has been the advance since the preceding generation when Tertullian could ask: "Are not we laity also priests? If it be necessary you may baptise and make the Eucharistic offerings as well as a bishop. Where three Christians are gathered there is a Church though they be laymen." Besides the authority derived from Christ through the Apostolic Succession, sacerdotalism gained further divine sanction from the fatally misleading analogy of the Christian ministry to the Jewish priesthood which long ago had been suggested in the Epistle of Clement and with the appearance of the single bishop had become complete—bishop, priests and deacons answering to high priest, priests and levites. According to Cyprian the one order has succeeded to the other with all its mediatorial functions. All the passages of the post-exilic law books that deal with the position and prerogatives of the priesthood he treats as applying directly to the Christian ministry, and the priestly fable of Korah, Dathan and Abiram remains a warning that he who dares to question the author-



ity of the Christian priest shall die. Plainly the spirit that moved in the Montanist revolt was dying out, and this tyranny upreared over those who bowed the neck. It is said that a people have the government they deserve to have. "Priesthoods come when they are needed; they are waiting for a society which has lost its savor and is no longer capable of exercising or appreciating its freedom."<sup>1</sup>

With the triumph of sacerdotal principles the separation of a clerical caste from the body of Christian believers became complete and lasting; and when Cyprian could declare that for a layman to criticise the conduct of a priest was to criticise God who had appointed him, the spiritual equality of Christians which followed from the direct relation of each and all to the Divine had vanished like the snows of yesteryear. The clergy began to pose as an order officially entitled to govern an ignorant laity bound to implicit obedience, and the impassable barrier between the two classes of fellow Christians came to be typified in the structural arrangement of the church edifice. The choir reserved for the numerous clergy was separated from the rest of the church in front by a close screen, commonly of iron-work, and on three sides by stone walls between it and the ambulatory, or passage around it. "It was a sort of church within the church, enclosed by walls, entered only by gates usually kept shut and accessible only to those who wore the clerical dress"—another mark of separation.<sup>2</sup> And so the internal unity of the Christian society was secured by its internal division into rulers and ruled, and the subjection of nine tenths

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *op. cit.*, 132. So too Réville (*Prolégomènes*, etc., 200): "Ce qui fait le sacerdoce, c'est le sentiment de l'incapacité de l'homme ordinaire pour réaliser l'union directe avec la Divinité. C'est dans ce sentiment de timidité, de faiblesse craintive, qu'en tout temps, en tout lieu, résidera la grande force du sacerdoce."

<sup>2</sup> Hatch, *Growth of Church Institutions*, 221.

of its members to the other tenth. This, rather than that later one of Pope against Pope, might well be called the Great Schism in the Church.

### 6. *Christology: Dualism in Thought*

Now if the development of Church government leads to this issue, it is only the appearance in a particular field of a general principle, the essential characteristic of Catholicity. It may be said with more exactness than such generalisations commonly possess that while the keyword of the Gospel is unity, that of historic Christianity is Dualism, a dualism that rules all thought and life. It appears with the Apostle Paul in the contrast so sharply drawn between Adam and Christ, flesh and spirit, will and grace, church and world. This ground thought was taken up from the philosophy so long and so widely prevalent.<sup>1</sup> The problem for Neo-Platonism was to reconcile the antagonism between the spiritual and the material, the infinite and the finite, the human and the divine; but inasmuch as it held the opposition of the two terms to be absolute, it naturally failed to reach a solution. And so this philosophy remained a vain quest for unity; it felt the need of a mediation which was impossible of attainment on the principles of the system, for these inevitably brought out and made persistent the division comprehended in every concrete object of thought. It was by a historic necessity in the last degree unfortunate that the categories of Christian thought, the general conceptions by which it worked, were derived from a philosophy so profoundly dualistic. The Gospel revelation of God contains that of man's relation to Him, the

<sup>1</sup> "Both Jewish and Greek thought fed upon the antithesis, the eternal and painfully perplexing separation, of the divine and human natures." Keim, *Jesus of Nazara*, vi, 387.

revelation of the essential unity of human and divine. God is spirit, and since man too is spirit he is mirrored to himself in the Divine, and finds in the Divine his own essential being. This is religious self-consciousness; it was the self-consciousness of Jesus, and the intuition of this unity was given to men as manifested in his life. But so given it was not fully grasped by Christian faith. Apprehended only in an individual form, its universal significance was hidden under that limitation; and very soon the unity of God and man was virtually denied by the restriction of its realisation, either as actual or possible, to the person of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Let us understand what this unity means. The uniting of two is not their merger or fusion. If divinity is predicable of all humanity, it is plain that the distinction between divinity and deity, between man and God, is not thereby obliterated. On the other hand if divinity is only predicable of one man, this one and only divine man is by his uniqueness differentiated from humanity, and his divinity tends to become indistinguishable from deity. This divinity of Christ was, so to speak, conceived as static rather than dynamic; not as won by effort of spiritual energy and a discipline of utter self-surrender, but as existing ready made, independently of any process whatever. So conceived it was placed out of all relation to the human race. It was not that one man, losing himself to find himself, rose through this self-realisation to intimate union with God, and showed the way to this union open to all who would follow his footsteps—showed that God-likeness is only the realisation of an ideal which every human soul bears within

<sup>1</sup> "The Church maintained in a single isolated experience the sublime reality of a union of God with our humanity. It remains for it to throw open to all in the boundless future what it has hitherto believed to be the sole prerogative of Jesus Christ." J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Historic Jesus and the Theological Christ*, 175.

it—it was simply that there existed one superhuman being, the Only-Begotten of his Father before all worlds. Jesus tells us we all are children of the Heavenly Father, and bids us rise to that consciousness and strive to make real the potentiality of our being. The response of humanity has been the renunciation of all claim on its part to a nature one with God's in kind: we are but men, it runs; you only are divine. With this a gulf opened between the Christ and his human brethren. If such were the nature of his divinity there was no longer any meaning in the call that summoned the first Christians to make his life their inspiration, to follow his example and win his spirit. The rise into union with the Divine was no longer the goal of men's spiritual striving, was not even an ideal for hopeless longing. The Spirit in which man was *not* mirrored to himself appeared as wholly alien to him, and the Christian world threw itself in self-abasement, fear and trembling at the feet of the Divine. Thus the old severance of God from man which Jesus sought to do away with reappeared when he, their union, was lifted to the skies and lost in a dogma as to the nature of the Deity.<sup>1</sup>

For this was the inevitable result, although unsought and unforeseen, of age-long controversy. From the first

<sup>1</sup> "Men found it impossible that as the Son of God he could be a man, but necessary that he should be God. The adjustment was extended to heaven; the Son was held to be a celestial being really clothed for a time in human flesh. In this way men ennobled the humanity which the Son of God had visited, yet they nevertheless robbed it of the true understanding of Jesus, namely, that he was *his own*, and that human nature without any fiction of mechanical mediation, without transformation or decoration, was capable, as in him so in all men, of the perfect indwelling of God. The divinity conferred upon Jesus stood in close connection with that Alexandrine philosophy which sought to fill the gulf between God and man with the phantom of a heavenly man in antithesis to the earthly man. Thus the ecclesiastical doctrine of the divinity of Jesus is the product of the mode of thought of the vanquished Judaism." Keim, *op. cit.*, vi, 387.

there were two different views of Christ's divinity; there was the Christology "from above" and that "from below," and while the opposition to Docetism strengthened for a time the insistence upon his substantial humanity, the constant trend of Christian feeling toward the greater glorification of the Divine Master brought increasing numbers to regard him as not less than a God. The Humanitarians appealed to the earliest tradition against this alarming innovation, and reproached their opponents with deviating from the ancient monotheistic faith; and when some to escape this charge explained that in their view Christ was not a distinct divinity, but his divine nature was blended with that of the Deity, the consequence was pressed upon them that then the Father must have shared the suffering and death of the Son.<sup>1</sup>

For more than a century after its appearance in the Shepherd of Hermas (c. 140), a theory called "Adoptionist" maintained a certain prevalence in East and West. It regarded Christ as a man inspired by the divine Logos and in virtue of his holiness, his complete submission to the will of God, adopted as His Son. Such a conception, however, fell below the requirements of the high Christology, which was continually gaining strength, and when at length its eminent defender, Paul of Samosata, was deposed by the Council of Antioch in 269, the virulent abuse heaped upon his head testified to the growing unpopularity of the Humanitarian contention. Although this Council, as mentioned in the preceding note, repudiated the doctrine that Christ was *homo-ousios*—of the same substance—with the Father, yet to this extreme position the mind of the Church was tending, despite the active opposition the movement encountered. Indeed

<sup>1</sup> This doctrine was nevertheless maintained by three successive bishops of Rome before it was condemned under the name of the Patripassion heresy by the Synod of Antioch in 269.



during the second and third centuries the defenders of the "Monarchy," as it was called, who maintained the position of the primitive age with regard to Christ, remained a party of considerable strength, and Tertullian even admits that in his day they represented the sentiments of a majority. As the dispute went on it waxed ever more acrimonious. Theologians on both sides were equally impressed with the conviction that nothing could be more senseless or wicked than disagreement with their respective opinions; but controversy only brought to view difficulties it could not surmount. In vain men strove to find a compromise between two contradictory propositions, such as the distinct personality of the Son and his indistinguishable unity with the Father. The theories propounded were necessarily vague and nebulous, since impossible combinations do not lend themselves to clear statement, and the labors of Origen only served to make confusion worse confounded. He thought to save the principle of Monotheism by a distinction between the supreme and the inferior God (αὐτοθεός and δεύτερος θεός), but one attribute at least they shared, for his theory of an eternal generation regards the Logos or Son as co-eternal with the Father. Whether this was a generation out of the substance, or by an act of will, the learned theologian left undecided, vacillating between one view and the other, and thus between equality and subordination. Now with the voice of Athanasius he speaks of the Son as *homo-ousios* with the Father, and again with Paul of Samosata declares him one with God through mere unity or conformity of will.

On the whole we find that at the opening of the fourth century the doctrine generally accepted regards the Word as a secondary subordinate deity who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Thus Christ is a God, yet not quite God; it was a position of unstable equilibrium that

left it open to theorists to lay stress now on the difference between the Son and the Father, now on their unity.

From this oscillation issued the two doctrines of Arius and Athanasius, and their long struggle until the one was overwhelmed by the other. Arius was a presbyter of Alexandria who had brought with him to that home of Neo-Platonic mysticism the reasoning spirit and methods of the liberal school of Antioch. He took up the problem of the eternal generation, which Origen had left to his successors, and submitted it to a logical criticism. His conclusion was that the notion of eternal generation was self-contradictory. A generated being could not be an eternal one; eternity was incompatible with sonship; if Christ was begotten he must have had a beginning, and, as Tertullian had affirmed without prejudice to his orthodoxy, there must have been a time when the Son "was not" (*Fuit tempus cum filius non fuit*). All agree, pursued Arius, that the Son is subordinate to the Father; that is, he is not equal to the Father. Not being equal, he cannot be of the same substance with the Father. For if he were he would be perfect God, since that substance is perfect, and there would be two perfect and equal Gods. Therefore whether we say of him that he was begotten or was created, it comes to the same thing: namely, that he has not in himself the principle of his existence, and this is precisely the difference between creatures and the uncreated Being. In all this Arius was no heretic.<sup>1</sup> All Scripture taught the inferiority of the Son, and every writer up to the fourth century had held the same view, which was an integral part of the original theory of the Logos and necessary to preserve the principle of Monotheism. The main positions of Arius were those of the

<sup>1</sup> "En définitive Arius n'avait d'autre tort que de mettre un peu rudement les points sur les *i* de la doctrine ecclésiastique en vigueur avant lui." A. Réville, *Histoire du Dogme de la Divinité de Jésus Christ*, 76.

eminent Tertullian; for him too there was practically no difference of meaning between the expressions "begotten" or "created." And as for the denial of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father, Arius could invoke in its support the decree of the Council of Antioch which had excommunicated Paul of Samosata. Yet it was of no avail that the ecclesiastical tradition was all in his favor; if the past was with Arius, the present and future were against him. The rising tide of Christian sentiment was making toward the conviction that Christ was no less than God, and Arius was struggling against it while his adversaries were borne upon its current. The propositions he advanced were such as the partisans of the high Christology could not refute and would not accept, and at a Synod convened by his bishop his arguments were met by deposition and excommunication.

Arius however found numerous and influential supporters, and a bitter controversy arose which the Emperor sought to quell by summoning the whole order of bishops to a council at Nicæa. The leader of the opposition to the Arian doctrines was Athanasius, archdeacon of Alexandria, who boldly took stand for the theory of consubstantiality, which carried with it all that Arius contested, relying upon the unity of substance common to the Father and the Son to meet sufficiently the objection of Ditheism: that is, a metaphysical abstraction was taken for the one God. The majority of the Council regarded the Athanasian contention as an innovation they were not disposed to accept, while at the same time they found the sharp definitions of Arius too extreme for their liking. They attempted to steer a middle course and drew up a confession of faith—whose key word was *homoi-ousia*; of like substance—which maintained the traditional idea of the subordination of the Son, while allowing him as many divine attributes as might be without passing that limit. This

creed, elastic enough to secure the adhesion of the Arians, they almost succeeded in adopting, but the opponents of Arius persuaded the Emperor that equivocal expressions would not end the difference, that the Council would fail of its mission if the matter were not pushed to a definite conclusion, and Constantine instructed the bishops that they must pronounce distinctly for the *homo-ousia* if they wished to please him. The majority yielded reluctantly to the pressure of the temporal power, with mental reservations as to the exact sense of the Athanasian term, and only a few were found to face the penalty of banishment for their conscientious convictions. The Creed finally set forth declared "the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father" to be "true God out of true God, of one substance with the Father." The resources of Catholicism were employed to account for the inconvenient error of the Synod which had formally condemned this doctrine half a century before, and the infallibility of the Church was preserved by ingenious quibbles; but it seems to have escaped notice that the statement of the Creed goes beyond the language of the fourth gospel and is at variance with its teaching.<sup>1</sup> The point to note is that the Creed seizes both horns of the Arian dilemma—either eternity or sonship—and placing these contradictory ideas side by side, accepts them both without attempting their conciliation. This continued to be the simple method of Catholic Christology. It soon became evident that the victory of Athanasius was more apparent than real. Gained by imperial authority rather than by the free judgment of bishops in Council it proved ineffective to the suppression of Arianism among the churches or even in high circles of the Court. Far from quenching the fires of theological strife, the Nicene deci-

<sup>1</sup> "That they may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." John xvii, 3.

sion only fanned them to fiercer heat, until more than fifty years later they were trampled out by the Edict of Theodosius.

The story of the fluctuating conflict of the fourth century is full of instruction for us. Arianism was an untenable system, but with all its defects it stood for rationalism against a crude dogmatising metaphysic, backed by ecclesiastical authority and defended by ardent and ignorant monks rather than by reason. The triumph of Arianism would have been the first step toward a return to primitive Christianity and the principles reasserted more than a thousand years later on the eve of the Reformation. Hence it was impossible. Such a movement was bound to succumb before the overwhelming forces making for the establishment of the dogmatic sacerdotal Catholicism that ruled the Middle Ages.

Meanwhile, after the question of Christ's divinity, arose that of his incarnation. The Creed merely stated the fact that the Son of God, of one substance with the Father, was incarnate and was made man. Its framers bent all their efforts to establishing the coequal deity of Christ, and the problems presented by his nature and person, as at once human and divine, were left unconsidered. Had Christ a human soul besides his divine one, and if so did this dualism of natures involve a duality of persons, or were the two natures blended in a single personality? Here speculation plunged into labyrinthine entanglements and wandered for generations in mazes without an issue. For all discussion started from the absolute opposition of divine and human, and never got beyond that starting-point. The Anthanasians found the assertion of a human soul in God the Son, with its freedom of will and liability to sin, repugnant to their tenets, and Apollinaris of Laodicea, clinging to the doctrine of consubstantiality as interpreter of the person



of the Christ, contended that his human nature must be regarded as nothing more than a semblance. Since man is a conscious, self-determining agent, to add deity to a supposed manhood of Christ would be to make two conscious agents, or two persons. Hence he argued for the single nature of the Word made flesh; according to this monophysite theory the Only-Begotten Son had merely assumed the temporary robe of an earthly body. This explicit denial that Jesus had been a real man seems a necessary deduction from the Nicene doctrine, but if the argument could not be answered, the conclusion was distasteful; a Christ of a nature wholly divine the Church was not prepared to accept, and the doctrine of Apollinaris was condemned by the Council of Constantinople. From the first it had been maintained against the Docetists that humanity was essential to the Redeemer of mankind; no salvation could be effected by a phantom Christ who did not share the nature he came to save.

This thesis now found a defender in Theodore of Mopsuestia who made the starting-point of his Christology the scriptural tradition of the human life. He pointed out that the plain indications of a moral experience spread upon the face of the gospels could have no meaning had not Christ possessed a rational human soul. From its activity came the perfection of obedience and piety that won for him the indwelling of Deity. The Word had taken, or "adapted," to himself a perfect man, and the two natures were conjoined in the unity of his person. Such stress was laid, however, upon the distinction of the divine from the human that it was pushed to their separation, lest the divine should be abased by blending with the human, or the human impaired by the loss of an essential constituent. At this point it began to appear that true God could not be at the same time true man. On one theory the human nature disappeared in the divine, and

on the other the two natures were so mutually exclusive that the unity of the person lost reality. On the whole it seemed that Christ must be regarded as *either* God or man, according to one's prepossessions or the weight to be attached to arguments in support of the opposite views of theologians. At the same time it was equally apparent that Christian sentiment would surrender neither the humanity nor the deity of Christ, and various attempts were made to construct a theory which should satisfy these opposite requirements and put an end to the discord that rent the Church. It proved a task impossible of accomplishment, and the wrangle over the two natures grew in violence year by year.

It came to a climax when Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, a disciple of Theodore and like him a student of Antioch, protested against the title Mother of God (θεοτόκος) applied to the Virgin Mary by the partisans of the high Christology. God, he said, could not be born, nor a creature bring forth its creator; the proper term for Mary was Mother of Man, of the humanity which the Logos made his organ. These statements, which appear not unreasonable, soon reached the ear of his unscrupulous enemy, Cyril of Alexandria, the same who had set on his monks to the murder of Hypatia. This exemplary Christian seized the occasion to accuse his colleague of heresy in making Christ a mere man, and moved heaven and earth to secure his condemnation. He gained the support of the Roman bishop by charging Nestorius with Pelagianism, something Celestine was contending with at the time and better understood than the Christological subtleties that distracted the East. With this aid he managed to control the Council summoned by the Emperor at the instance of Nestorius, and that unfortunate prelate was deposed and driven into exile. This Council of Ephesus decided against Nestorius that the two natures

in Christ were not separable but united, without explaining, however, what was to be understood by such resultant union, and the way was left open to interpret it as the complete absorption of the human nature in the divine, as of "a drop of vinegar which leaves no trace when poured into the sea." This was in effect to revive the doctrine of the single nature of the Word made flesh, and Eutychus, an abbot of Constantinople, who pressed the decree of Ephesus to this conclusion, was excommunicated as a follower of Apollinaris. His cause was espoused with ardor by Dioskoros, the worthy successor of Cyril in the See of Alexandria, and Eutychus was acquitted and restored by a second Council of Ephesus, acting under the patriarch's dictation, and terrorised by the fierce Egyptian monks. Leo of Rome, to whom both parties had appealed for support, rejected the decrees of this Council, since known to history by his scornful appellation of a *Latrocinium*, or Synod of Brigands. Dioskoros retaliated by excommunicating his great rival of the West, and the strife threatened to become world-wide when a sudden change of rulers brought a reversal of the imperial policy. Support was withdrawn from Dioskoros and another Council was called to undo the work at Ephesus.

This was the famous Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which condemned alike the extreme positions of the opposing parties with regard to the nature and person of Christ, and practically determined the orthodox Creed. Leo was appointed president and though he did not attend in person he sent by his representatives a long letter conveying his own views of the questions at issue, and this became the basis of the formula adopted by the Council after long and hot debate. That Christ was one person with two natures was declared to be the interpretation of the Nicene Creed. That is to say, in the God-Man divine omnipotence, omniscience and holiness together with

human ignorance, weakness and infirmity existed at one and the same time. This paradox was imposed upon the faith of Christendom by that Roman Church which regarded all questions from the viewpoint of ecclesiastical interests, and was disposed to champion the thesis dear to the piety of the multitude rather than those maintained by a philosophy of which it knew little and for which it cared less. Thus the problem which had occupied so many generations was abandoned. How, in what manner, the divine and the human natures, each existing in its own mode of being, were united in one personality there was no attempt to explain; there was merely the assertion of the union as a fact, or properly, a dogma. The Council of Chalcedon speaks the language of pure unreason when it pronounces Jesus Christ real and true God, perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, uniting in himself their two natures—which retain their opposition of finite and infinite—without separation or division, without absorption or confusion, and without change of either, each nature conserving its own properties; and not parted or divided into two persons, but their duality in nowise affecting the unity of his person. Upon this Réville remarks: “Un tel décret comprenne qui pourra.” But Christian piety had long been fed on contradictions and had acquired a relish for the diet, and the decree could be accepted in the spirit of Tertullian’s declaration: “It is credible because absurd, certain because impossible.” To those who employ other criteria of credibility and certainty the doctrine of Chalcedon presents some difficulty. The two natures stand side by side in the unity of the person, and it seems to a reflecting mind as hard for him to make them go together as for one to ride two horses. The puzzle of a twofold consciousness baffles understanding and it is not satisfying to be told that Christ was ignorant as man of what at the same time he

knew as God. This vague, elusive personality of a being half human, half divine hovers beyond men's mental grasp. Too divine to be really human and too human to be quite divine, the Christ both God and man turns out in effect to be neither God nor man.

If we review the long Christological debate which has been hastily outlined—and which as Keim says, “ended with the infirmities and absurdities of dotage”—it will be plain that no other issue than this was possible; that is, no efforts to harmonise the views of opposing theologians could meet with success. If unity of person were insisted on the duality of natures had to be tacitly abandoned, or *vice versa*. The rival schools of Antioch and Alexandria might argue from these opposite standpoints and vigorously excommunicate one another for confusing the natures, or dividing the person, but if each could confute the arguments of the other, neither could establish its own. It becomes plain that under the thought conditions of the epoch the dogma of the union of divinity and humanity in the person of Christ was doomed to remain nugatory, since it was merely a formal, empty declaration in face of a persistent opposition, the original postulate which tenaciously held its ground. The essential dualism of human and divine was for everyone an ultimate truth, and none dreamed of calling it in question. Christian thought was tethered to this preconception and struggled in vain to get beyond it; and it was because of this unresolved antithesis that a God-Man, a being at once divine and human, remained a self-contradictory conception which no amount of labored exposition could render intelligible. Christology could find no issue from the *cul de sac*, and for all its effort was left with a contradiction as the last word—a contradiction complacently accepted by the Church. There were many, however, who balked at the defiance of reason, by whom contradic-



tory notions could not be hospitably entertained. The restless Greek intellect was not to be halted in its quest of the unattainable solution of the problem, but now all further endeavor to eliminate the contradiction became heresy. The theologians condemned as heretics were those who sought to form some theory of the mystifying dogma that would render it comprehensible, but no such theory could be reconciled with orthodoxy.

In the eighth century we find a confession of faith winning wide acceptance in the West which goes by the name of the Athanasian Creed; but while its origin is uncertain, and its author unknown, its attribution to Athanasius, the true sequel to whose Christology was that of Apollinaris, is palpably absurd. It is drawn with a view to clinch the statements of Chalcedon and to enforce in all its rigor the Roman doctrine which prevailed in that Council by stopping every crevice which might let in a breath of heresy, and threatening the recalcitrant with eternal damnation. This Creed sums up the labor of Christian thought during seven centuries, and soon came to be regarded as one of the most sacred documents in possession of the Church. The candid audacity, or the brutal frankness, with which it carefully enumerates and defines the contradictions of the orthodox theology till one might believe it the burlesque of an adversary, could not shake its hold upon the veneration of the pious. And yet for all its dogged insistence on the humanity of Christ the practical effect of its dogmatic method upon men's views of the God-Man could not be averted. Monophysites and Monothelites could be excommunicated, but one term of the antithesis was bound to swallow the other. Unconscious logic drew the only conclusion from the original premises: if man was in no sense divine, the divine Christ was in no sense human. To this negation all had been tending from the first. In so far as the idea

of the incarnate Logos gained predominance the life of Jesus was fading to a merely illusive appearance of one who was not a real human being at all; and though Docetism might be expelled from the door, it re-entered at the window when the glorified Christ was so absolutely separated from his fellow-men that his humanity suffered complete eclipse. Gradually he melted into the general notion of the Godhead and as Divine Man vanished from the sight of Christendom.

The course of Christian thought followed that of Neo-Platonism. As the World-Soul of Plotinus, the link between intelligence and matter, was itself taken up into the sphere of the intelligible and lost its mediating function, so it was with the idea of the God-Man. And as a hierarchy of powers reaching up to the Absolute from the material world was the next invention of Greek thinkers to supply the necessary mediation, so the Virgin and the Saints had to be brought in to fill the vacant place of Christ.

It remains to insist upon a view which has already found expression (Messianism, 76). The reaction against Athanasian ditheism has led to a "humanitarian" view of Jesus that makes him a man like another, a Jew of his time, subject to the influences of his environment and on the level of his countrymen. Yet what is strikingly distinctive of Jesus is his independence of the environment. Historically he comes from all the past of Israel, as Shakespeare from the past of England, yet to a deeper view it is an accident that Jesus is a Jew, as it is an accident that Hamlet is a Dane. Jesus is a Man, with a manhood that overpasses all racial limitations. The historical conditions amidst which he appeared do not explain how he became creator of a new epoch in the history of religion. No man in all history was so little the creature of his age,

and no one of sound judgment would venture to say that that age would have been much the same turning-point in religious history if Jesus had never quitted his native town. Rather would such a one be disposed to accept an opposite view which has been thus expressed:

There have been crises in human history and revolutions in human life manifestly due to the appearance of some towering genius whom his age could not understand and could but slowly overtake. Such we believe was pre-eminently the case with Jesus; and we should have to say it was true of him even if it were true of no other.<sup>1</sup>

It is not too much to say that the incidents recorded in his biography, the order of events, the scene of action, the conditioning circumstances, all these are of no essential interest, and it would change nothing to find that they all were quite other than they are represented to have been. The insistence upon such historical conditions to the belittling of Jesus betrays an intellectual myopia that misses the meaning of his message to men and reduces him to a mediocrity which makes it impossible to account for Christian history. If in the Conciliar dogma Jesus becomes practically mere God and is nothing to us, in the reactionary humanitarianism he becomes a mere man and is equally nothing to us. "No hypothesis which merely assumes the measure of a common man will lead us to an existence which essentially transcends the level of the human series."<sup>2</sup> The humanity of Jesus is indeed to be insisted on, "not because Jesus was like the rest of humanity, but because the rest of humanity is to become like Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Our thought of his manhood must not be a levelling down of Jesus, but a hope of the levelling up of

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 73.

<sup>2</sup> Keim, *op. cit.*, ii, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Macfayden, "Humanity Measured by Jesus Christ," *Contemporary Review*, August, 1904.

mankind to him. His life is the actual embodiment of the human ideal, the completion of man as man, and the destiny of mankind is there portrayed. One who holds to the ideal oneness of the human and the divine, while recognising a clear distinction between divinity and Deity, need not hesitate to take for his own the language of the *Te Deum*, for he who stands above us, unique in realisation of "the highest, holiest manhood," merits no less a title than that of God's "adorable, true and only Son."

### 7. *Asceticism: Dualism in Life*

Men act as they think; a cast of mind, a habit of thought are influential in moulding life and conduct, and a theology that insisted on the fixed opposition between human and divine could not but lead to a practical separation between the Church and the world. Indeed it is not too much to say that such a separation is involved in the idea of a church, as that idea became dominant in the second century. In early days religion had been essentially social, a relation to its god of the tribe, or city-state, which involved the relations of the tribesmen or citizens to one another, and gave birth to the rules of morality. With the conquests of Rome the gods disappeared from states and kingdoms reduced to provinces, and now, as long before under similar conditions, the religious consciousness sought refuge in the idea of a direct relation of the individual to the Divine, independent of his relations to political society. Now for religion to become a man's own affair, deepening his inward life, bringing him to a new self-consciousness,—this was surely an advance. Jesus too taught a religion intensely personal, but he would have it take possession of the whole man, of his inward life and therefore of his outward life as well, in

its every aspect and relation and every field of its activity. Nothing could be more foreign to the mind of Jesus than to sink a gulf between the religious and secular life, to represent religion as constantly pointing upward to the future and never around upon the present, to set the church and the world against each other like two hostile camps. The Gospel deals with the common life of men, and urges sincerity, integrity, high motive in all they do. Jesus distinctly rejected for his followers the ascetic teachings of the Baptist. He asked for no technical, ecclesiastical virtues, but only for things that are matters of course and which every man's conscience assents to. All his demands were for men living and working in the world. Their religion was not to be a thing apart, but one with daily life and its pervading power. His own open life showed them how to live among men in touch with the heavenly Father, in consciousness of the sonship which made them brethren, and so in love and kindness, in peace and joy.

But that religion is simply life is a truth the world was not then, nor is it now, prepared to accept. At that time in the widespread Mysteries, in the Synagogues of the Dispersion, in certain philosophical Schools there was to be found a bond of union for human beings regarded from the single point of view of their relation to God. Such a union was in principle a church, a community of the religious, in the narrow sense of the term, in which the concerns of the spiritual nature were separated from all the secular affairs of life. And there was nothing in devotion to the memory of Jesus, now that for his worshippers he had ceased to be a man, to make the Christian organisation more than a Church, a community taken out of society at large—to make Christianity comprehend all interests of life, secular and sacred, as the primitive religions had done. It could gather an aggregate of



individuals united through one supreme interest, but could not mould them into a social organism, since it excluded all their other interests. The more the Church sought to grow, to establish itself, the more it was logically led to treat the secular interests as trivial and worthless. It was idle to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom on earth after that Kingdom had been transferred to heaven. This world the Church looked on as only a place in which to prepare for another, and the preparation demanded withdrawal from a worldly life. Its aim was not to sanctify the things of time and sense, but to escape from their noxious influence. By its constitutive idea the Church was forced into the path of asceticism, which leads not to the regeneration of human society, but to a cloistered refuge from an evil world; and in this mould Christianity was cast for a thousand years. Even today it is a notion widely prevalent that Christianity in its ideal is an ascetic and world-renouncing life. Schopenhauer can find nothing of worth in that religion except its holding up of this ideal, and no Christians worthy of the name but the great ascetics of the medieval ages. Tolstoi too, a far warmer and richer nature, will have it that Christianity is essentially a renunciation of the world. Such a view of Christianity seems a strange delusion, if Christianity is to mean the religion that Jesus brought into the world. The student of its history will find that the ascetic principles which took possession of the Christian Church have their source not in the Gospel, but in alien influences which overcame and set aside the Gospel teachings.

Slight traces of the ascetic tendency may be found in the early Christian communities, induced by their sense of opposition to the hostile pagan world, and by the overshadowing Messianic expectation which bade them use the things of this world as though they used them not,

for the time was short. The feeling that Christians should not hamper themselves with ephemeral domestic ties leads Paul to speak of marriage itself in disparaging terms, with the logical implication that celibacy is the holier state.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the Pastorals strongly condemn the ascetic practices probably introduced by gnostic teachers.<sup>2</sup> It was in the Montanist reaction against the growing worldliness of the Church that Asceticism in its extremer form made its first appearance, and although the Church on other grounds broke with Montanism and pronounced it heresy, it did not part with the ascetic ideal which had been set before it. A perfect Christian life was to be sought in voluntary poverty, celibacy, a discipline of privation, and the mortification of the flesh. Such an ideal is plainly an exotic, not a native growth of Christianity. It came to Phrygia from the remoter East. It was the offspring of that Oriental Dualism which viewed the material universe as the creation of a being hostile to the spirit of goodness; whence the inherent evilness of matter and the consequent sinfulness of every corporeal instinct. Neo-Platonism, Hellenic in structure but touched with the Oriental influences affecting the mind of the third century, adopted these conceptions and gave them a wide currency among people of Hellenic education. "Much in the life of St. Anthony might have been based on teachings of Plotinus and Porphyry whose ethics laid such stress on the purification of the soul from the contamination of matter and the ties of sense."<sup>3</sup> This dualistic asceticism was also carried to the West in the advance of Manichæism. In North Africa that religious system gained numerous adherents, and it never wholly lost its influence upon the creative mind that shaped the thought of Latin Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. vii.

<sup>2</sup> I Tim. iv, 1-8.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, 139.

Intellectually a huge blunder, asceticism is morally a radical vice. In aim and motive ascetism is pure selfishness. "No one of us liveth to himself," writes the Apostle, but it is wholly to himself that the ascetic lives. His abstentions and renunciations are not for the sake of others, but for his own sake. They are the price he pays for the bliss of heaven; he believes that a choice is offered him between temporal and eternal good and he chooses sagaciously. His is not the sacrifice of self for the world, but a sacrifice of the world for self. It is an anxious effort to save his own soul, and this too is a blunder: no soul is saved in that way. With all the beauty of its mystic feeling this spiritual selfishness is the keynote of the famous manual of the Middle Ages. It has been said that

never was misnomer so glaring as the title of the book, *The Imitation of Christ*. That which distinguishes Christ and his religion, the love of man, is absolutely left out. It begins in self and it ends in self. Let the world perish, it seems to say, so the single soul can escape on its solitary plank from the general wreck. . . . Our religion to be itself again must shake off not merely the vices but the virtues of monastic Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

And yet that the Protestant idea of personal religion was here at one with medievalism we may read in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, where Christian sets forth alone, regardless of his wife and children left behind in the City of Destruction. Between monkish and apostolic Christianity the contrast is indeed evident: the one would abjure the worldly life, the other worldliness of heart; the one counts it saintliness, the other counts it sin to be without natural affection; the one draws a rigid line between the sexes as between hostile races that cannot

<sup>1</sup> Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, viii, 300.

approximate, the other unites men and women in the fellowship of the Christian household; the one would paralyse the body, the other would keep it under; the one would suppress human nature itself, the other would overcome the evil in it; the one is a religion of fear, the other of the love that casts out fear. Nothing is plainer than the Gospel's inculcation of a thoroughly positive morality in which "thou shalt not" becomes "thou shalt," and its insistence upon inwardness and spontaneity of individual action as against the passive virtue trained by a policy of restrictive regulation. It would seem that the teachings of Jesus must have been utterly forgotten, and the Evangelist's picture of the judgment faded from memory, before an ethic of privation and restraint, an ethic of negation, could obtain such dominance in the Christian world.<sup>1</sup> There could be no completer perversion of the Gospel of Jesus than to turn the soul's energies into channels of apathy, suppression, abnegation,—ignoring life's realities and abandoning earth's duties in the quest of an empty egoistic spirituality. The Master must have looked with a pitying wonder upon his misguided disciple "renouncing" the world, fleeing to the cloister from a social disorder that called for the best energies of men to set aright, seeking to propitiate the throne of grace by a petty round of religious practices while, cut off from converse in the sweet charities of life, he was neglecting utterly the "new commandment" given to the Christian. Looking back to the apostolic age, to the missionary enthusiasm that fired the souls of the first Christians and sent them forth to evangelise the world, we feel that monasticism was a confession that Christianity had been a failure, that its aims were not to be realised. But whether it was in despair or in perversity it is plain that the monk forsook his faith to follow strange gods.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxv, 31-46.

And the dualistic delusion carried the ascetic far. For him the body was an enemy to be fought down fiercely. Or it was the prison of the soul, not its house, and the conditions of its life chains to be broken by fastings and scourgings, by all the grotesque agonies a fanatic's ingenuity could devise to stifle the natural throb of pulse or nerve which his perverted mind took to be a sin against the God who had made him what he was. It was hard to maintain the battle against flesh and sense amidst the distractions and temptations of the city; the wiser course was to "withdraw" (*ἀναχωρεῖν*) altogether from the world, and soon the self-exiled anchorites sought refuge in dismal solitudes of the East, and a nearer communion with God by desertion of their fellow-creatures.

But the solitary life is beyond the strength of ordinary men. In utter isolation from one's kind it is not less difficult to retain the mental balance than it is to find provision for bodily needs, and after a few years in his lonely hermitage it is doubtful if the occupant would be found entirely sane. And so anchorites tended to become cenobites, to gather for mutual aid and intercourse into communities, and to formulate regulations under which to live. The earliest of these regulated communities was founded in the last years of the third century by one Pachomius, an ascetic before he was a Christian, and from the banks of the Nile the monastic system made its way to Europe, where it met with the ardent advocacy of Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine.<sup>1</sup> In course of time monasteries were established in great numbers in all Christian lands, and the love of idleness, the remorse of the criminal, the distress of the pauper swelled the ranks of the devotees of the religious life.

The deepest pitfall, the most dangerous snare of the

<sup>1</sup> The ascetic enthusiasm of Jerome finds expression in his letter to Heliodorus—Epistle xiv.



devil that haunted the mind of the ascetic was sexual desire. In vain he fled from the haunts of men; he could not flee from himself. The passions outlived the maceration of the body, and his disordered fancy peopled the desert or the monastery cell with insistent tempters of alluring beauty bent on the ruin of his soul.

Any one reading much patristic writing is astonished at the extent to which the struggle with fleshly lust filled the thoughts and occupied the strength of the Fathers. Anthony struggling with filthy demons is not unrepresentative of the general state of the Church. Christians had to writhe themselves free from their lusts.<sup>1</sup>

"A saint," it has been said without much exaggeration, "appears to be a person of no ordinary degree of natural viciousness and a preternatural violence of animal passion whose sanctity mainly consists in the curious and far-fetched ingenuity of the torments by which he contrives to keep himself within the bounds of decency." Yet such efforts were on the whole unsuccessful, and in the end the monasteries sank into the fleshly vices they made such strenuous endeavor to escape and became notorious for gluttony, drunkenness, and debauchery.<sup>2</sup> Even worse was the effect of the monk's unnatural life to narrow the mind, to harden the heart, to stifle all kindly sympathies,

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, *The Classical Hermitage of the Middle Ages*, 145.

<sup>2</sup> Clémangis, the eminent theologian, is one witness out of many: "Si quis hodie desidiosus est, si quis a labore abhorrens, si quis in otio luxuriare volens, ad sacerdotium convolat, quo adepto, statim se caeteris sacerdotibus voluptatum sectatoribus adjungit, qui magis secundum Epicurum quam secundum Christum viventes, et cauponulas seduli frequentantes, potando, commessando, pransitando, convivando cum tesseris et pila ludendo tempora tota consumunt. . . . Quid aliud sunt hoc tempore puellarum monasteria nisi quædam non dico Dei sanctuaria, sed Veneris execranda prostibula, sed lascivorum et impudicorum juvenum ad libidines explendas receptacula? ut idem sit hodie puellam velare quod et publice ad scortandum exponere."

till the recluse became a cold, unfeeling bigot, callous to the softer emotions, dehumanised of every genial impulse, defiantly unscrupulous in defense of the interests of his order, and unsparing in cruelties visited upon those he deemed the enemies of his faith. Hypatia, murdered by the ferocious monks of Nitria, was but the first of many victims of the pitiless monastic piety.

It marked the ascendancy of ascetic ideas that "religion" came to signify the monastic life and rule, and secular whatever was outside the monastic life and rule.<sup>1</sup> Although troubled by continual friction between the monks and the secular clergy, the Church was obliged to authorise the anomaly of the monastic system, whose Rule of strict discipline made amends for its own laxity, while the dense fanaticism of its votaries made them useful auxiliaries in quarrels with feudal lords, and offered a ready instrument for the perpetration of any violence. To accept the ascetic principle, however, to point to the monastery or the hermitage for the normal type of the religious life was to encounter a difficulty. The Rule of Faith declared the Church to be both holy and Catholic, but if this was holiness it was evident that a Catholic Church could not be altogether a holy one. The uncompromising Montanists had taken stand for holiness at all costs, but the extension of the Church and its dominion over the world formed the paramount consideration in the mind of its leaders, and to this end the great opportunist party found it necessary to lower the strict moral standards of earlier days and to legitimise an average morality which it was not too hard to live by. It was not an escape from the dilemma—either holy or Catholic—but only an attempt to make the best of it, when the theory was adopted of a double morality,—the lower, binding upon all Christians, and the higher, recommended to those who sought perfec-

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, *Organisation of the early Christian Churches*, 161, note.

tion. Thus the distinction between the Church and the world on the ground of holiness now became one within the Church itself. The monastic life alone was the true "*vita religiosa*," and henceforth the monks remained the élite of the Church, the representatives of its ideal of sanctity—an ideal the layman was not expected to attain. It was the same distinction as that between the Law-worshipping Pharisees and the people of the land, knowing not the Law and cursed. As the Jewish Law pronounced the mass of the people "sinners" because the activities of daily life rendered it impossible for them to comply with its minute exactions, so a conception of religion which made it at its highest an abandonment of the world, and condemned all ordinary life as irreligious, involved a like disparagement of ordinary Christians. In one of his Essays Pfleiderer tells of a picture that made a strong impression upon the young Luther. It represented the Church as a great ship sailing heavenward with only priests and monks for passengers while the laity were struggling in the waves, some clinging to ropes thrown to them from the ship, but many more drowning helplessly in the sea of worldly life. Thus the Church returned by way of the far East to the position of the self-righteous Pharisees, and discarded the morality of Jesus which is at every point the contradiction of Pharisaic—or as the word means, Separatist—piety.

The antithesis between Church and world, spiritual and temporal, sacred and profane made impossible any wholesome influence of religion upon social life, and indeed the Church soon took stand in direct opposition to social morality at three essential points. In the first place, to earn one's own living is the duty of a self-respecting man. "If one will not work neither shall he eat" is the dictum of the Apostle. Productive labor secures personal independence; we speak of one who has acquired

a sufficiency for his support as a man of independent means. So with society; the backward races are poor; the accumulated wealth of a people is the material basis of its higher civilisation. The religious life was ordered on other principles. It was mainly passed in a mechanical routine of prayers and services, in contemplative idleness and dreams of heaven. Property must be made over to the Church; in one's own hands it was a snare to the soul, a lure to perdition, and the true saint was a pauper and a mendicant.

In the next place, society depends for its soundness and efficiency upon the intelligence and capability of its individual members and their personal initiative. To this all history is witness: for instance, it was the lack of such free individuality that made the weakness of Eastern despotisms and explains the overthrow of the Persian hosts by the little Greek democracies. But the first thing demanded of the monk was the surrender of his individuality. He was not to think or act for himself; he must renounce his own will and way and walk according to the judgment and bidding of another. Implicit obedience is his first duty, and for the monastery the necessary condition of its existence. His superiors are for him God's representatives; what they command is in effect divinely ordered and to refuse obedience is deadly sin. The principle of obedience is enforced by the *Regula*, a definite law ordering the days and hours of his life, so that in carrying out its detailed prescriptions he may know that he is always obeying. Like Samson, captive in the hands of the Philistines, human individuality entered the monastery shorn of its strength to become a blind slave in a treadmill.

Finally, the foundation of social welfare is the Home. Though the corruption of the Roman Empire has been greatly exaggerated, sexual immorality was widely pre-

valent in the days of its decline. The Church Fathers sternly condemned it, but they did not look for a remedy in the elevation of marriage and the fostering of family life. Far from raising marriage to the level of the Christian demands, their prurient misconception of the normal relations between the sexes degraded it to a kind of licensed immorality. Even Paul, when he speaks of it as something that might be grudgingly allowed the Christian, but which he would do better to avoid, shows that he takes the lowest view of marriage.<sup>1</sup> From his utterances the step was short to the ascetic doctrine that true holiness lay only in virginity, and hence the higher law demanded the celibacy of the clergy.<sup>2</sup> Thus one most holy form of human love was banned and banished from the perfect Christian life; and with it too the natural affections springing from the ties of blood. The father's love, the mother's, could not be known to monk or nun, and that of son and daughter, brother and sister must be renounced or sternly held in check, for these, though free from sensual taint, tended to distract the soul that should be wholly devoted to seeking its own salvation. Here and everywhere Monasticism seems an illustration of the text: "He that will save his soul shall lose it."

When the monk condemned the relations of the family and the state as unfit for the spiritual man, he was flying in the face of eternal law, of the divine will as written in human

<sup>1</sup> "If they cannot contain let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn." I Cor. vii, 9.

<sup>2</sup> "Jerome wrote enthusiastic and extravagant letters to his admirers, urging the virgin life which he himself led, whether in Rome among adoring women or in his cell in Palestine where he also counselled and directed." Taylor, *op. cit.*, 159.

To the fancies that fastened a stigma upon nature, and the exaggerated value of sexual continence, may be traced the legends of the virgin-birth of Buddha and the Christ. Nature being inherently evil and all her ways unclean, a divine being could only have a supernatural origin.



constitutions. His contempt for marriage as a hindrance to grace may be regarded as the act of one who knew not what he did, but it was none the less an offence against God and man. Its punishment may be seen to have grown in this case directly out of its nature, for they who aimed at purity became the scandal of the age for impurity; striving to be something above men, they fell below men and degraded the human ideal.<sup>1</sup>

It is a commonplace of our chequered human life that nothing evil is wholly unmixed with good. That the better monasteries in their better days were of service to civilisation in keeping alive through ages of darkness some smoky flame of intellectual light, some feeble activity of the artistic impulse, and in other ways as well, no one will venture to deny. Yet none but a partisan will venture to assert that the balance between good and evil inclines in favor of Monasticism. History exhibits the disastrous effect of its false principles upon personal and social life, and a glance at that history is enough to show how the type of Christian character was distorted and how the claims of social duty were set aside by the Three Vows of the religious life—Poverty, Chastity, Obedience—by which, as Hegel says, “The socially immoral received the stamp of consecration.”

#### 8. *The Church as Mediator*

It is another remark of Hegel's that the unity of man with God, which is the heart of the Gospel revelation, “is not to be superficially conceived, as if man, immediately and without further condition, were divine.” God is Spirit, and man too is spirit, or as the poet says: “A god is germ.” In germ—in potency; he has to become spirit, become his true self, and his life is this becoming.

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *Christian Institutions*, 171.

The immediate unity of man with God is therefore an unreality and its realisation comes through a process of internal mediation, or self-mediation. Man's divine nature is the ideal truth of his being which has to be realised in his consciousness and life. And let no man take it easily, as though somehow eventually it will realise itself. Paulinism speaks of the "fruits of the Spirit," but growth unto a perfect man has no analogy with the peaceful growth of a plant; it is a difficult self-conquest. It is the goal to be attained by a man's own striving, by the dominance his higher nature wins over the lower, for,

Unless above himself he can erect himself,  
How poor a thing is man.

Here then, it cannot be too often repeated, is a man's own work; he cannot delegate it to another; no other can do it for him. Yet he is not alone, for the Father is with him: "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do." All this is in the teaching of Jesus, who makes the first step in the spiritual life the *metanoia*—the turning from the lower self, the turning to God.

As we have seen, Paul's anthropology does not admit the *metanoia*. Man is helpless and hopeless in his alienation from the divine, and the work of mediation is done for him by the Christ. When however the humanity of the "One Mediator, the man Christ Jesus" vanished from the eyes of men,—when, as at the Ascension, he was taken up into heaven and a cloud received him out of their sight, then the Church assumed the rôle and functions of the Mediator. Given the dualistic preconception, the fixed opposition of human and divine, and then the free access of the personal soul to God, which for Jesus was the simplest reality, becomes impossible, and a system of

external mediation to bridge the gulf between earth and heaven a necessity.

The Latin mind was ungifted with originative capacity for speculation, and the theology it took over from the Greeks, though coloured by the Latin temperament and reset in juristic phrase, remained for it a matter of secondary interest.<sup>1</sup> The metaphysical questions that concerned the Greek Councils soon ceased to be living issues in the Western Church, for Christian Rome was the child of ancient Rome in its inherited propensity to establish an organisation for governing mankind, and its theological activity was directed to matters more germane to its practical genius and the juridical training of its leading minds—sin, grace, and means of grace, the constitution of the Church, its order and discipline, the organisation and authority of the priesthood, the relations of clergy and laity. In the Roman view the dogmatic Creed did not stand as in itself the power of salvation, but salvation was in the power of the Church as possessor of the Creed and the Sacraments. The Church with its sacerdotal system and its spectacular worship held the first place in the religious life of the masses, while theology was relegated to the learned few, and in the system of Augustine furnished the doctrinal code of ecclesiastical absolutism. Thus Christianity took a different course in the West from that taken in the East. Under Greek influence faith was changed from allegiance to Christ and the following of Christ to acceptance of what one was taught concerning the kind of person he was; under the influence of Rome the thing requiring acceptance was rather the ordinances of organised clerical authority. The Roman contribution to the development, or the transformation,

<sup>1</sup> Honorius I in a letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople deprecated the dangerous subtleties of Trinitarian controversy, observing that such inquiries were matter for grammarians rather than Christians.

of primitive Christianity was to substitute the Church for Christ as the Greeks had displaced him by the Creed.

And the Roman character was of a sort to make this substitution effectively complete. Religion in the early days of men's undeveloped intellect was wholly an affair of ritual. By the performance of certain rites, simpler or more elaborate, the community sought to maintain a bond of union with its god, or to propitiate the dim un-earthly powers in whose hands lay the lives and fortunes of men. Everywhere worship was an outward form, but nowhere was the temper of formalism more pronounced and rigid than in the old Roman religion. There the *opus operatum*, which was the solely important thing, was a thing of vast importance. To avert the wrath or win the favor of the gods everything depended upon scrupulous exactness in following the prescribed forms of the ceremonial in their minutest detail; the dress of the officials, their posture and gestures must be in strict accordance with ancient precedent, and the utmost care was necessary in reciting formulas wherein words had in themselves an operative virtue which was lost if one word were substituted for another. It is said that on one occasion a sacrifice had to be repeated thirty times on account of slight mistakes committed in its performance.<sup>1</sup> Tenaciously conservative of primitive tradition, the Romans went on celebrating their rites of the old religion down to the later days of the Empire (we have noted the recitation of the Salian Litany by Marcus Aurelius), for it was still believed that the safety of the State hung upon the due observance of the ritual practices handed down from antiquity. It mattered not that the Pontifex Maximus was known to be a skeptic so long as he performed the right ceremonies in the right way. The old faith was dead in the hearts of the people, but the respect for out-

<sup>1</sup> Mommsen, *History of Rome*, iii, 111.

ward observance retained all its old strength. No people have shown themselves so indifferent to the spirit of religion and so insistent upon the form. This supreme regard for the outward and formal was carried over into the Roman Church, and the ritual of Christian service came to be treated as the State-religion had been treated. The efficacy of a sacrament was nowise impaired by the doubtful character of the celebrant; the office covered his personal unworthiness. The ceremonial was all in all; the devotional spirit which had sought expression in common worship was allowed to languish and expire, and the materialism of the old religions crept in and rooted itself in Christianity.

The formalism or externalism which was so marked a trait of Roman character appears in another connection. The Roman conception of morality had sole regard to the deed done, not to the doer, and made right doing mainly consist in docile conformity to the laws. When a reformation of morals was contemplated by Augustus the only means of effecting it seemed to be the passing of special laws for the purpose. Horace places all reliance on this method of action. He does not believe men capable of reforming themselves or of following good advice, and so recourse must be had to the compulsion of law.<sup>1</sup> In this view of morality as a legal responsibility the similarity is apparent of the Hebraic and the Roman cast of mind. The Jewish Christianity dominant in the Church of Rome was of a kind congenial to the Roman temperament. Religion as conceived by Pharisees and Sadducees commended itself to a people who themselves were legalists and ritualists from native bias and long training, and Pharisaic and Roman ideas of law and morals combined to lead the Christian communities back to the nomistic religion from which Jesus and Paul had sought to set men

<sup>1</sup> Ferrero, *The Greatness and Decline of Rome*, iv, 154.



free. At every point the Gospel principle of inwardness and personal activity was set aside in the Catholic return to the old externalism.<sup>1</sup> The Christian's moral life was no longer the following of Christ, but his feet were guided by the sign-posts of communal regulation; his worship became attendance at a spectacle, as the Jew's had been a looking on at the Temple sacrifice; and his faith, no longer the inspiration of a life, sank to a passive or negative attitude of mind—the not dissenting from Church teaching.

And so the individual withered, and the Church was more and more. In the early day faith in the Redeemer Christ and a loving allegiance had drawn the Christian into brotherly fellowship with others likeminded with himself. The Church was the association of the faithful; that is, it was first the Christian, then the Church. Now the sequence was reversed and it became the established principle that the Christian could hold no relation to his Lord except through the Church and as a member of the Church.<sup>2</sup> This seems a revival of the primitive religious idea that only as a clansman, not as an individual, one was related to the god of the clan. The Church however was something more than the clan, and other than the

<sup>1</sup> Of this a story told of Robert of Paris offers striking illustration. Concerned at the frequency of perjury by witnesses who swore upon the sacred relics, the Count secretly emptied the reliquary, satisfied that thus he would relieve those who took oath in future from incurring the guilt of their intended crime.

<sup>2</sup> This principle it was that crushed the proto-martyr of the Reformation. The capital point in the prosecution of Jeanne Darc was her claim to personal inspiration and divine direction, which stamped her as a heretic and schismatic. To the question, Did she not acknowledge herself subject to the Church of God on earth, her reply was that first and above all she owed obedience to God Himself. It was the reassertion of the Gospel principle, the spirit's free communion with the Divine, for which Luther was to contend successfully eighty-six years later. See Michelet, *Histoire de France*, vi, 246-248, and G. Hanotaux, *Jeanne d'Arc*, 300-309.

corporate unity of its members. Cyprian's dictum, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* was a logical deduction from the accepted premises; sinful man is saved only by the grace of God, and the Church is sole custodian of divine grace and trustee for its distribution; hence all salvation of men depends upon their outward communion with the Church, which takes the place of inward communion with God. This salvation is no longer the winning of a character "worked out" by moral struggle, but escape from future torment and the obtaining of pleasant quarters in another world. And this communion with the Church means simply entire submission to clerical authority. For in its mediatorial capacity the Church means the Clergy. To their hands are committed the indispensable "means of grace," the deposit of the saving faith, and the administration of the saving ordinances, and in their power to grant or withhold absolution and the sacraments they hold the keys of heaven and hell.

The Church in this new sense, the Church from which the laity is excluded, claims all spiritual insight and knowledge of divine things, and to it the development of doctrine exclusively belongs. Christian truth is promulgated in dogmas shaped by Councils of Bishops; they determine and ordain and the laity has simply to accept on faith—faith without insight, and acceptance is enforced by the rack and the stake. In the view of Catholic orthodoxy the Bible was a dangerous book and the reading of it was prohibited. In England copies of Wiclif's translation were confiscated and burned wherever found in the hands of the people, and its possession was the principal charge against the persecuted Lollards. One man accused of "having in his keeping divers works prohibited and damned by the law, to wit the Apocalypse, the Epistles and Gospels in English," died in prison from cruel treatment, and the trio convicted of having "studied

diligently upon the New Testament for the space of one year" suffered probably a similar fate.<sup>1</sup>

When literalism identified the eucharistic elements with Christ's body and blood, the laity ceased to have any part or lot in the magic-mystery which took the place of the old thank-offering. The Host is now declared to be the present Christ apart from reception by the faithful; they have but to fall down before this mere thing held up for their adoration in the hands of the priest. Primitive religions cannot show a grosser fetichism.

Prayer, the outpouring of the heart to God, is the breath of the spiritual life, but the *Paters* and *Aves* of the monk are a routine exercise, perfunctory and soulless, and the petitions of the layman, debarred from communication with the heavenly Father, are addressed to mediators who will intercede for him, the perfect dead. For the Friend of sinners has changed in men's eyes to the Judge, the *Rex tremendæ majestatis*, and the Virgin Mother is specially invoked to appease the wrath of her Son.

On the same principle the Christian must confess his sins not to God, but to his spiritual director. In such confession he is bound to expose all his life and conduct in detail, and then he is told what he must do to escape damnation. There can be no question of moral amendment, of inward change; outward penances are the thing required, actions so mechanical that they may on occasion be vicariously performed, or the wealthy sinner may buy immunity in a draft on the merits of the saints laid up in the Church treasury. The system of confession which obliged every one to inform against himself made the clergy a world-wide police, and the powers of excommunication and interdict coupled with their lurid painting of the terrors of hell gave them, to borrow Dryden's figure, what Archimedes wanted, another world on which

<sup>1</sup> See G. M. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, 131-342-349.

to rest the lever that moved this one at their pleasure. Thus with conscience surrendered to clerical direction, as personal conviction had been yielded to the *Ecclesia Docens*, the laity were reduced to spiritual slavery under an initiated ruling caste.

It must be apparent to a reflective mind that any project of mechanical mediation devised to bring the human soul into union with God is a childish futility. If personal faith is life in communion with a heavenly Father there is no need of any *tertium quid* to unite those who are already united. And if faith is only a vain aspiration, and the Being it seeks is eternally beyond its reach, then no mediating agency can possibly be found which has power to annul this fated dualism of finite and infinite. It is moreover equally obvious that such a comprehensive scheme of tyrannical tutelage as I have hastily outlined is miscalled a system of mediation. So far from mediating between the soul and God, it blocked and barred their communion. It brought the soul to church and kept it there. For the Christian the means of grace were not means but the end. The Church stood alone, in itself sacred and divine, and the devotion paid to it was nothing else than idolatrous. According to Jesus religion is the conscious relation of the soul to God, a relation profoundly and intensely personal; but in the history of the Christian religion we find human personality subordinated, subjected and finally annihilated. And the Divine Personality was set aside as well when a man's religion was made to consist in his relation to things impersonal—in observance of churchly ceremonies and adherence to a set of scholastic ideas. Thus eliminating both terms of the religious relation, God and the soul, the Church took away religion from the world.

Again, in the following of Jesus the religious consciousness should do no less than take possession of the man in

mind, heart, and will, becoming as it were the soul of life, the animating principle of all thought and action; but when religion came to mean acceptance of a creed imposed by authority and a matter of rites and forms and "practices" of devotion, it became a thing apart from life and divorced from morality. No longer a spiritual power, the Church sustained no vital relation to human society. The practical life of the world was left to take care of itself, with results which the story of those distracted times pictures in detail. During long ages the world remained on the whole a heathen world—men when they were ill thinking of religion with terror, and when they were in health not thinking of it at all. Christianity being removed from the realm of the conscience and the will, its primitive moral requirements sank out of sight, a thing of the forgotten past. Every offence had its easy condition of absolution, and it satisfied the demands of religion if a man gave no sign of dissent from the orthodox theology or revolt from subjection to the Church; nothing else mattered. "Whether upon the whole religion had passed the point where it becomes more injurious to morals than would be its entire absence" is a question which the judicious and temperate Hallam finds a doubtful one. At all events it had reached the point where crimes could be commended when the perpetrators were zealous for the faith or duly considerate of ecclesiastical interests. A monkish chronicler tells with high approbation how a bishop made a baron drunk in order to cheat him out of an estate. And Gregory of Tours, after relating the atrocious deed of Chlodwig (Clovis) in the murder of a prince whom he had instigated to parricide, concludes: "For God daily subdued his enemies to his hand, because he walked before him in uprightness and did what was pleasing in His eyes." That is, the Frankish king was an orthodox son of the Church.



Nor could the Church be looked to for an example of a higher than the worldly life. Professing a pure devotion to the things of the spirit, her activities were centred on the things of sense, and she stood revealed a palpable self-contradiction. She had gained the whole world and lost her own soul. From the days of Constantine the greed of worldly wealth had been the characteristic vice of churchmen, and when Gregory passionately besought Charles Martel to save, not religion, but church lands from the Lombard invader, he was not the first to show greater solicitude for her temporal than her spiritual interests. Thenceforth more than ever the Church seemed bent on heaping up riches and less than ever seemed to care by what means they were acquired—as appeared when license to pillage was sold to the brigands by a Pope misnamed Innocent.<sup>1</sup> The reckless rapacity, the cynical venality, the tide of corruption that surged from the Roman court through every channel of the Church system, might now and then stir a man like Grostête to a protest of indignant sorrow, but in general contemporary writers relate the infamous transactions of their time with a naïveté that evidently views them as matters of course. By such means the Church amassed the enormous wealth which became the bulwark of her political power and the instrument of her political intrigue. In right of their vast possessions the ecclesiastical body took stand as feudal lords, and bishops and abbots were also counts

<sup>1</sup> “Everyone was expected to bequeath to the Church some portion of his property, and if he died without acquitting himself of the obligation the Church took the administration of his effects into her own hands. She appropriated what she had undertaken to dispose of for the benefit of the poor to her own use, as being by far the most meritorious pauper. She was presumed to have been the more immediate object of the intention of the deceased, or in any case she possessed a better knowledge of what would conduce to his soul’s good.” Mackay, *The Rise and Progress of Christianity*,

and princes, maintaining all the rank and power of the secular dignity. In virtue of their monopoly of education ecclesiastics entered the courts and councils of princes and became the power behind the throne. They were chancellors, ambassadors, prime ministers, and holding nearly every civil function held the reins of state in every court of Europe, while every thread in the network of their policy ran direct to Rome, the seat of a sovereignty miscalled spiritual.

With the Church itself involved in the moral collapse there was nowhere any other agency to effect reform; the Church was all in all.

The Church did not need to go back to Christ, for itself was Christ perpetuated. It did not need to return to the New Testament, for it continued the New Testament. Ever sufficient to itself and revolving upon itself, it moved forward oblivious to the fact that it was plunging into moral degradation, that its path was strewn with deeds of moral monstrosity. Both the blind and the blind leaders of the blind fell together into the ditch.<sup>1</sup>

A significant interest attaches to the tragic episode in the thirteenth century of the life and work of Francis. With him, perhaps of all the sons of men the truest follower of Jesus, the Gospel reappeared in all the beauty and power of its appeal to the unperverted heart. Sprung from the people, like the prophets of Israel, like them Francis had heard the imperative summons of a divine commission. He and his companions made themselves apostles of the Gospel life, the life of purity, of moral vigor, of loving service, under the inspiration of a deep personal faith—a life in their eyes so natural that one need only come to know it to embrace it eagerly. The great success of the movement attracted the attention of

<sup>1</sup> Osborn, *The Recovery and Restatement of the Gospel*, 62.

Church authorities. Such activity on the part of laymen was irregular and disquieting; it was necessary to bring it under ecclesiastical control, and Francis was urged in a friendly manner to adopt the "rule" of one of the constituted monastic orders. Then ensued his struggle to keep his association laic, and free from the bonds of favors and privileges received from the Church at the price of independence. Independence however was a thing the Church could not possibly allow; it knew only submission or revolt. Francis was not lacking in courage, but his deep humility and his simple trustfulness betrayed him to the astute ecclesiastics. He could not well be crucified, and so they swallowed him, and the light he had upheld against the darkness of the time was quenched under the robe of the Franciscan Order.

When the priest sees himself vanquished by the prophet, he quickly changes his ways; he takes him under his protection, he inserts his harangues in the sacred canon, he throws upon his shoulders the priestly chasuble. The days and the years pass, and the moment comes when the crowd no longer distinguishes between them and ends by viewing the prophets as belonging to the clergy. It is one of the bitterest ironies of history.<sup>1</sup>

It may be true that the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus could not be retained on earth except an earthly body were given to it; but if this was the historic necessity, it was none the less a necessary evil. Very soon—and this is a point of first importance to a right understanding of Christian history—very soon the Body of Christ showed itself subject to disease and decay. The Church of the Middle Ages has few defenders. That the kingdom of Christ's Vicar became a kingdom of this world, dominated

<sup>1</sup> Paul Sabatier, *Vie de S. François d'Assise*. Introduction, viii. A work of unusual value and interest.

by the worldly spirit, recreant to its trust and mission, betraying and denying its divine Master and sacrificing duty, honor, decency to its reckless greed of wealth and power—all who are acquainted with its history will readily admit. But it is the common opinion that the corruption of the Church which stirred the soul of Luther had its origin in the medieval period. It is looked upon as a lapse from earlier Catholicism, a decline and fall, an obscuration of the pristine purity that halos the ante-Nicene golden age. Before the day of Constantine the Church was faultless, but it fell upon evil times and suffered from the influence of an unwholesome environment, and as we know, the worst things are those that come from abuse of the best. In this view the ecclesiastical institution escapes obloquy and the evil that vitiates it appears something adventitious. It is a view that history will not allow us to entertain. The corruption of the Church was a native growth. It was not due to adverse circumstance, to a blight fallen upon Christianity from without. It was a corrupt tree that bore that evil fruit. The seeds of decay, the noxious germs of medieval Catholicism, were sown in the second century, the formative period of Catholic Christianity that determined all its after development.<sup>1</sup> Then arises the movement that will substitute creed for life, a dogma of theology for a Father in heaven, a despotic hierarchy for the spiritual equality of Christians, a sacerdotal mystery for the commemorative meal of loyalty and love. Then everywhere the outward and sensuous begins to take the place of the inward and spiritual, and then the infinite falsity that rules the destiny of historic Christianity declares itself in the flat

<sup>1</sup> "All the elements of the later development of the constitution of the Church were present and operating at the end of the second century, and indeed earlier." Harnack, *Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, 170.

negation of the first principle of the Gospel revelation, the unity in nature of God and man. It is to this age and no later one that the impartial student will trace the sources of the corruption that only asks time to mount and spread through every fibre of the ecclesiastical body.

### 9. *Authority*

In the second century the Army of the Lord was advancing in three columns on three lines of march which finally converged at an impregnable position, the authority of the Church. Or, since what is last in time is first in the order of thought, we may say that the principle of Authority was the constructive principle of Catholicism. It was this that shaped its whole development; the hierarchical constitution, the dogmatic creed, the scriptural canon may be regarded as specific functionings of this ruling idea, latent in the ecclesiastical mind, and under its impulse the Catholic Church grew into "a vast authoritative system, like the Roman Empire, whose power of command was not to be resisted or questioned."<sup>1</sup> The ecclesiastical claim of authority, and its complement the ecclesiastical virtue of obedience, rest on that *proton pseudos* of the mediating Church, the assumption of the spiritual incompetency of the individual Christian. The great revolt of the sixteenth century was a movement to the emancipation of the spirit, and it freed large numbers of Christians from the authority of the Church, and its hierarchy; but not from that of the Scriptures, nor from that of a dogmatic creed. For Protestantism these continued to be authoritative in the strictest sense, and so the principle of authority in religion maintained its sway. The Reformers went back to Paul for their religion rather than to Jesus, but they did not gather

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *Christian Institutions*, 176.



from the Apostle's teaching that a Gospel which freed men from the yoke of Law was equally intolerant of subservience to any and every external authority over the personal religious life.

As to this question of authority let us see what we may learn from the Master. The words of Jesus voiced an absolute self-confidence: "Ye have heard it hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you." We read in the first gospel that "the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes." The Scribes were always referring to their authorities. Their teaching leaned for support on Scripture and tradition, and was sure of itself only so far as it accorded with the teachings of old. Jesus spoke with a bold self-assertiveness that sought no confirmation from any authority however august or revered. He spoke as one free to judge the competence of any time-honored authority; as one who himself was the authority. What is the secret of this self-assurance, the explanation of this authoritative tone? To the Scribe divine inspiration was only to be found in documents; revelation was an ancient history and the records of the past the only witness to God's presence with men. Jesus felt within himself that presence, and his striking originality and independence were the utterance of this inspired consciousness. No man ever spoke with a more decisive authority, but the authority is not his own; it is that of truth and goodness, of the God in whose name he speaks, and it has been truly said, "he is never more selfless than when he most asserts himself." He gives utterance to the spiritual truths revealed in his consciousness, and in uttering them he imposes them, or rather they impose themselves by their own virtue. Truth itself seems to speak with his voice in accents of calm certitude, illuminating and convincing like the power to charm of holiness

or love. The fourth gospel which most exalts his person makes him claim authority only for the truth of his message: "If a man believe not my word I judge him not; the word which I have spoken will judge him at the last day." The third Evangelist gives us the passage above referred to in a different form: "The people were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power." It was the power that was the authority. His word went direct to the heart and conscience, the inmost soul of men; they felt its power; their dim and dormant spiritual sense awoke in response to his call upon it, and they bowed to his authority for they felt it to be impersonal: it was the authority of self-authenticating truth and of the absolute imperative of the good.

Even in his most emphatic utterances Jesus appealed to the reason and conscience and the spiritual instincts of his audience. He demands belief not because he says a thing, but he expects it to make an impression on men's minds and to gain their assent because it carries in it its own authority; because it awakens a secret consciousness of its truth in those whom he addresses; because it needs only to be uttered to obtain the assent of honest hearts open to conviction. His appeal passes from his own higher nature to that of his hearers; it is addressed to the moral sense within them, and the authority with which he was felt by the multitudes to speak was derived from the inward assent and testimony of their own consciences.<sup>1</sup>

Other authority than this there is none.<sup>2</sup> The test of any authoritative teaching is its power over men, and the

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *The Natural History of the Christian Religion*, 70.

<sup>2</sup> "The authority of a man of genius flows purely from his higher insight, and is recognised by others in whom that insight dwells in less intense form. The truth of Christianity cannot be established by an appeal to any authority other than the response of man's spirit." Watson, *The Philosophic Basis of Religion*, 36.

proof of its authority lies in men's personal experience of its truth. The only verification of which a spiritual truth is capable lies in its appeal to men's intuitions. Of this the Apostle is aware when he writes: "by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." And Jesus seems always urging men to try his teaching, to practise it, and see if it be not true: "Everyone that heareth these words of mine and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man that built his house upon the rock."

On the other hand, it is the ecclesiastical assumption that truth is not self-evidencing, but a doctrine depends for its truth upon external attestation. It is to be accepted for true because set forth by authority, rather than acknowledged as authoritative because recognised as true. For divine truth is not apprehensible by the intelligence of the individual, and he can only receive it by accepting the teaching, of the Church, the guardian of revelation.<sup>1</sup> But that is not to receive it at all. In no proper sense of the word can one "receive" truth that is not apprehensible and verifiable by his own mind, nor can an "acceptance" of Church doctrine which does not imply intelligence of it be a thing of any meaning. One incapable of comprehending revealed truth cannot know

"Churches, Bibles, Prophets are of authority to us all just in the measure in which they quicken in us an answering inward sense of the verity of that which they allege." Armstrong, *God and the Soul*, 146.

"Any other authoritativeness than that of the truth itself, responded to by the nature of the man himself, avails only to dwarf and not to develop the man over whom it prevails." Moore, *op. cit.*, 320.

<sup>1</sup> This doctrine of the feeble or limited powers of the human mind, urged by Newman to enforce the authority of the Church and by Mansel to enforce the authority of Scripture, was carried to its logical issue by Spencer who pronounced God to be a name for the ultimate Reality which remains unknowable by us. A deeper philosophy than his is aware that an unknowable reality is simply an unreality, that nothing can be saved to reality which is denied to knowledge.

what it is of which the Church speaks, and the Church can no more teach it to such a one than we can make a dog understand a demonstration in Euclid. And so "the very idea of a religious authority *external* to man is based on a childish psychology, and a little thought will suffice to convince us that it is always and everywhere a fallacy."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, let us ask what qualifications enable the Church to guarantee the truth of its deliverances. The mind of the Church is not other than human. The Church does not possess any special powers of insight not belonging to the general mind of man. Water will not rise above its source, nor the intellectual capacity of the Church, though regarded as an abstract entity, above that of the individuals who compose it.<sup>2</sup> Here I may be told that this is beside the point, for it is the Apostolic Church, the trustee of apostolic tradition, that claims authority. The teaching of the Church is of that which has come down to it through the ages from the disciples who were taught by the Lord himself. But in the first place, if in its early day the Church might hold itself to be only the divinely appointed instrument for the transmission of the faith once delivered to the saints, it cannot be denied that this passive rôle was relinquished in the creed-making ages when it formulated a metaphysical theology such as the companions of Jesus would have found incomprehensible. Secondly, this foundation of apostolicity, upon which rests the authority of the Creed, the Canon and the Episcopate, history shows to be in every case a foundation of sand, a figment

<sup>1</sup> J. Réville, *Liberal Christianity*, 175.

<sup>2</sup> "Men have spoken of the authority of the Church as if the Church could by any possibility have authority save as it enshrines personality and becomes a sort of sum of the influence of personalities for the guidance of the life of persons in the world. The essence of the authority of the Church lies in its representing a corporate experience which yet was individual experience before it was corporate." Moore, *op. cit.*, 317.

of theorists. Finally, the Apostles could not bestow a kind of authority they did not possess. The followers of Jesus were called, it is true, his disciples, or pupils. He was addressed as Master and questions of all sorts were put to him as to other teachers. Yet whatever his reputation, Jesus was no professional Rabbi, nor the founder of a school. That his disciples formed such a school, becoming in their turn authorities in the exposition of religious truth, is one of the many ecclesiastical fancies concerning Christian origins which misrepresent the real conditions of the past. The disciples were expressly forbidden to assume the function of authoritative teachers, like the Scribes. None of them, said Jesus, was to accept the title of Master or Teacher, and none was to be preferred above another, for they all were brethren. That this prohibition is emphasised in the tradition shows that it was distinctly remembered and in the earliest time strictly observed. All who received the Gospel were disciples of Jesus alone, and this common relation was the ground of the equality of all and the spiritual independence of each. Jesus taught by what he was. His own person and character spoke with the authority that truth exercises over the mind and goodness over the conscience and love over the heart. It is authority of a kind that does not drive men but draws them, for it wins their instinctive deference. It was this authority he would have his companions share. Filled with his spirit and fashioned in his likeness, they should speak with his power, and he could say: "He that heareth you heareth me." And so too the commission of the Christian Church is to teach what Jesus taught and in the way he taught it; not dominating but enlightening the minds of men; not demanding their assent to its teachings, but opening their eyes to the self-evidencing and therefore authoritative truth. For always it is the



true, the good, the divine that rightfully command us, and we are so made that we readily acknowledge their authority, or if we revolt against it we are in revolt against our own best self. Of such a nature is the legitimate authority of the Church. Its dogmas have just that degree of authority, and no more, which is given them by their harmony with truth, as that manifests itself to reason. Its institutions and ordinances are authoritative only in so far as they are expressions of the true, the good and the divine. The question always is, are they really such expressions—a question which the history of the Christian Church cannot answer with an unqualified affirmative, nor will a student of that history be disposed to acknowledge that the Church is the sole depositary of these spiritual treasures, and that it is only through ecclesiastical channels they are dispensed to men.

To remove the seat of authority from every outward dictatorship to the inward spirit of man, and in the name of the inward authority to abrogate the outward, this was the revolution implicit in the Gospel and its necessary outcome. It was a revolution that soon encountered the check of reaction. The Church, the Creed, the Scriptures, enshrining something of truth, goodness, God, have claimed for themselves the authority which belongs to that which they enshrine. Their authority has been taken, not as representative, but as inherent and of its own right binding upon men. No one is allowed to question this authority; it does not consult but controls the intelligence, and exacts a blind submission which is miscalled faith. And then? We have submitted to authority, we are safe in the fold of the Church, we may sleep in peace. But that is the sleep of death. Faith is an energy, and no authority can dispense us from its exercise. It is sufficiently obvious that the Creed or the Scriptures or the orthodox theology are not truth for me unless my

mind takes in the truth they assert and assents to it. And then all is done; authority has no part to play. If a man is brought to see what is true and right, to feel the beauty and power of the good, what need is there of any authority to enforce their claims? Or what further authority is possible? These things assert themselves as absolute; there is no higher authority to give them sanction. If they do not make themselves felt, do not waken the response of a man's own mind and heart, recourse to external authority cannot help the man.<sup>1</sup> When Matthew Arnold would teach us what is meant by "the grand style" in poetry, he does not dogmatise, does not ask us to accept his *ipse dixit* as authoritative; he appeals to our poetic sense. He cites examples and asks, Does that impress you, does it speak for itself? then you know what the grand style is. It is the right method in religious teaching. When they asked Jesus, "By what authority doest thou these things?" he answered, By the same as that of John the heaven-sent prophet. That is, he simply claimed for his teaching the authoritativeness which belongs to the obviously true and right. In the sense of his questioners he claimed no authority at all. He felt that freedom from external authority was indispensable to any deepening of men's religious life. He

<sup>1</sup> "Il est juste que si ma vie intérieure s'endort, si l'indifférence engourdit et paralyse ma conscience, il est juste et bon que toute certitude m'échappe, que je me sente chancelant et que je ne sache plus où me prendre. On voudrait des appuis pour le moment ou l'appui de l'esprit fait défaut. Il n'y en a point; il ne doit point y en avoir. On voudrait posséder un moyen de pouvoir croire sans croire aux heures où dans l'affaissement de la vie spirituelle on ne croit plus. Ce moyen n'existe pas; il ne faut pas qu'il existe. Il ne faut pas que nous puissions nous imaginer que nous sommes à l'abri parce que nous avons trouvé notre refuge dans des croyances correctes ou dans les pratiques de dévotion officielle." L. Monod, quoted in Sabatier, *op. cit.*, 433.

On the other hand, if men reject a religious teaching because they find it untrue, compulsion, persecution, Dragonades, Autos-da-fé cannot help the cause of the untruth.

appealed to the moral sense of his hearers, their intuitive reason, their kindlier instincts, and he left with them the issue, saying: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." If we have the mind of Jesus in this matter we shall know that the only authority for the truth is the truth itself, and the responsibility for a man's attitude toward the truth rests solely with the man himself. It is one that cannot be taken from him, nor can he divest himself of it. Yet men try to escape it. They will not themselves strive to gain insight of the truth, and it only remains to take what is given them for truth on the word of authority. But submission to authority is homage paid to a usurper. The authority sits on the throne of the true and right and its deliverances are accepted not because in themselves they are convincingly true and right, but because the authority declares them to be so. It is the weakness of human nature that leads to the craving for authority, for some outward reliance to take the place of self-reliance. Men find it difficult and dangerous to walk alone, to think for oneself, and shrinking from the responsibility of forming their own judgments or controlling their own lives, they incur the graver responsibility of putting themselves in the hands of others who offer to take charge of them and make their own exertion unnecessary. This is suicidal, for self-activity is the life of spirit. The one effort of Jesus was to rouse, stimulate, inspire it; his one aim was to make men, or rather to lead men to make themselves. We may read in the tragic history of Christianity how the brute force of ecclesiasticism has crushed or stupefied the spirit whose life is freedom; and this because external compulsion of command or restraint is destructive of character, since that is a man's own creation.

It may be said that a religion of authority is a needful discipline for the unintelligent and the spiritually immature, and through this is developed the capacity for

personal autonomous life. It is enough to answer that Jesus did not think so. He dealt with the common people, the ignorant and uneducated, but he saw no need to put them in leading strings. Just as they were, they were competent to receive the Gospel he preached. Trust in the Heavenly Father, the love of brother men, inward righteousness and purity of soul, these things find response in the heart of our common humanity. The wayfaring man though a fool is not without the elemental manhood to which Jesus trusted his message. It is evident in view of what he had in mind that to demand acceptance of his teaching on the ground of his personal authority, to require his hearers to take what he said for true because he said it, would be to defeat his purpose. And it is idle to claim that the religion of the spirit is the end attained by a discipline of authority that arrests the free energies of the spirit. In fact religions of authority always regard the temper of submission as an end in itself. They who make this claim remind us of those politicians who have declared themselves in favor of a protection that leads to free trade. That is a kind of protection of which we have no experience; the advocates of protection have never found the time ripe for its abandonment.

Let us be convinced that religion is not something we can take at second hand from others. Religion is life, spontaneity, personal initiative—or it is nothing. It is a personal responsibility essentially inalienable. Responsibility to whom? To God, the only authority that can rightfully claim the submission of the soul. From Him comes the only compulsion that leaves man man, for it comes with his own free recognition of its right to compel him. This authority alone is of such a nature that its rule is not so much the constraint as the liberation of the soul's activities. It does not impose an outward obligation, but one that lives in the very nature

of man, and in obedience to its behest is the growth of a man's own character. The service of God is freedom—and no other service is—because in the ideal truth of his being, in his higher self, man is one with God, and hence the more entire the self-surrender the more complete is the self-attainment.

To such effect we might argue with the ecclesiastic and those who submit to his control: let me add a final word on a point of deeper moment which these brief studies bring to our view. In his "Introduction to the Gospel of St. Luke" Maurice observes that the Gospel of Jesus is not a religion at all. It seems a case of what is not uncommon, that one may utter a deeper truth than he himself has realised. If the Broad Church leader had grasped his own declaration in the fulness of its meaning, in all its reach and bearing, he might not have incurred Arnold's criticism that "he passed his life in beating the bush without ever starting the hare." Let us take this dictum of Maurice in earnest, and if it seems a mere misuse of terms, still any phrase is good that puts a matter in a clearer light, and this one may help to bring the essential character of the Gospel more distinctly into view. The Christian religion, then, is in spite of itself the best of religions; but it is only a religion. The Gospel of Jesus is not a religion at all. In so far as religious conceptions control and shape the apprehension of it, and are not themselves transcended and transmuted by its spirit, it must inevitably lose its true character.<sup>1</sup> Christianity is

<sup>1</sup> "The revelation of the Christ is not within the process of the history of religions. It is not to be brought as one stage into the development, or as one subject in the comparative study of religions. It is other and more than they. It can no more take the place to which it is invited among the various religions of the world than the figure of the Christ can take its place in the Pantheon of a Julian." Mulford, *The Republic of God*, 57.

For many evil consequences of taking the Gospel for a religion see pp. 70-80.



the Gospel made into a religion, and so become an amalgamation of incompatibles, of contradictories. Hence its weakness and its relative failure in the life of man, or the history of the world. It has not been perceived that where the Gospel comes in conflict with Judaism there it is in conflict with religion. Judaic ideas were religious ideas; the Pharisee was the type of a strictly religious man, one who cared more for religion than for humanity. Jesus appeared in a land the most deeply religious in the ancient world, and he ignored religion, he put it aside, and when it attacked him struck back in self-defense. Every religion, it has been maintained, and with historical justification, consists of a creed and a cultus, and any concern with either is conspicuously absent from the ministry of Jesus. His attitude toward them is given us by the fourth Evangelist: God is Spirit, and men must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers; if any man will do His will he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God. Jesus sets forth no religious institutes; he has no suggestion of form of worship or formula of doctrine or rules of pious practice.<sup>1</sup> He faces the great realities, the fundamentals: Here we are, we men on earth; what is our life, how are we to live? Live,

<sup>1</sup> "Jesus seems to have aimed to show men how in love and joy to live the common life in full sense of the presence of God and of eternity. His greatest contribution was that in joy and love he lived that life. The contrast between religion and life, fundamental to so many others, was completely alien to him. To him true religion was life, and religion was the true life." Moore, *op. cit.*, 263.

"His revelation implies the great simplification of religion, the emphasizing of the essential, of the really important. It implies the end of theology. Christianity is in its essence a layman's religion, for its prophet was Jesus, a layman. But the rise of the Pauline theology brought about the great change; as for Christian dogma, with its revelation of a body of doctrine, it is the veriest caricature of the Gospel. Jesus redeemed the people from the Scribes, and by the Scribes he was put to death. The two events are related as cause and effect." Wernle, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, i, 101.

he tells us, conscious that you are a child of God, thanking Him for His goodness in the past and present, trusting Him for the future and trying to do His will. And His will is that we shall be pure and true and kind. That last word names our feeling for our kin, the human brotherhood. Life is to be lighted and warmed by love, love to God our Father and to men our brothers. That is all, for that is enough. And it takes us above and beyond religion. What is religion? It begins in a yearning of the human soul to seek some Divine One, if haply it may feel after Him and find Him; it is the groping for some means to come into relation with a God who is unrelated to us, the fruitless quest of some meeting-point between finite man and the Infinite he must adore—fruitless because between these two there is a great gulf fixed. And then the aspiration of the spirit sinks into an art of bribery, efforts to purchase the divine favor and propitiate the divine wrath; and there follow sacrifice and priesthood, ritual and ordinance and all the futile devices of a mechanical communication between the two essentially alien worlds of earth and heaven, or of nature and grace. Thus the ground thought of religion appears: the dualism, the separateness of human and divine,—just as Agnosticism rests on the dualism of subject and object. Their common error is to remain with the moment of antithesis as a finality, and fail to recognise it as the immanent distinction in the unity of spirit. This unity, the living unity of man and God, is the revelation of the Gospel. And so the Gospel is the answer to the human yearning: it is the revelation that the meeting-point is not to seek, for it is found in the ideal manhood whose realisation in “the first-born of many brethren” is the assurance that we all shall come at last to the measure of the stature of his fulness. The Gospel then is not a religion, because it is the goal of all religions. They are a striving toward the truth; this

is the truth. Jesus has no scheme to bridge the gulf between human and divine; he declares there is no gulf to bridge. He is not the founder of a religion, for he shows the long mistake of all religions; shows that the spiritual relations of man cannot be expressed in terms of dogma and ritual, but can only be interpreted by the ideas of sonship and brotherhood. He is not the founder of a religion because he is the proclaimer of a Gospel which is addressed to men simply as men and therefore to all mankind. It unites men on the basis of their common manhood, while religion divides them into separate groups on the basis of creed and cultus. For religion is nothing if not exclusive. The local or tribal worship was at once a bond of union for its votaries and a barrier of separation from worshippers of any other god; and in every age the same religious narrowness has sought to monopolise God and make Him the God of a clique as it once made Him the God of a clan. When the Gospel declares that all men are children of God, and their common relation to the Father of all is the bond of human brotherhood, that is in effect to make an end of religion, for it sets aside all that is distinctive and exclusive in rite and doctrine and calls men of all religions into the family and household of God.

And there was a "Gospel before Christ," it has been said. Something of it, a shadow cast before, appears eight centuries earlier among his people. We follow in the Old Testament not only the history of a religion, but of a struggle between the intuitions of spiritual truth and the selfishness and slavish fears of the religious instinct. And the Old Testament closes in gloom with the triumph of the mighty religious instincts of man's lower nature. The voice of the spirit is silenced and the speakers hunted down and slain. We see no prophet any more and soon we see Pharisees. Jesus came to continue and complete

the suspended revelation, to carry on the hopeless struggle. Much more than a prophet he is, but he is that. He comes the successor of that long line of fearless preachers of a spiritual righteousness, and shares their martyrdom. He too encounters the hostility of priestly zealots and falls a victim to the brute force which is the last argument of bigotry. And until the present day of milder, though still effectual methods, there has scarcely been a Christian age when one who should come preaching the Gospel with the same uncompromising fearlessness would not have met a similar fate at the hands of the same kind of men—however they might call themselves disciples of the Crucified.

## V

### Conclusion

THE impartial student will find himself compelled to recognise that the Gospel of Jesus and the Christian religion are two quite distinct and different things. The distinction appears in the New Testament itself.<sup>1</sup> And amidst its varying religious teachings there begins in the

<sup>1</sup> "It is the distinction between religion as experienced by one who was spiritually in touch with divine realities and in communion with God and the accretions which become attached to his message and his story; between the Teacher in his aloneness and simple greatness and the portraits of him drawn by his own and succeeding generations; between a God-allied life illustrating a divine message and human conceptions and opinions of both determined by varying interests, tendencies, prepossessions and points of view; between the intuitions of an inspired Master who in his purity of heart beholds God and the speculations of lesser men who grope if haply they may find Him; between the clear-sighted vision which sees what is real in man and God and the turbid reasoning which grasps at phantoms; between the straight way to God through loving obedience and mechanical schemes of redemption. . . . The spiritual teacher in communion with God and in fellowship with man, how near he is to us, how apprehensible to thought, how inspiring as an example! But the Messiah on the clouds, the Second Adam, the great High Priest, the Eternal Logos, what remoteness, what spiritual sterility, these terms convey! The real Jesus who goes before us in the life of a son of God inspires our reverence and devotion; but the apocalyptic and metaphysical Christs stir in us no sentiment of love, no fervor of discipleship. Had only these latter been given there would have been no disciples, no martyrs, and no Christian Church. Did the New Testament portray only these Christs, and not also the living Jesus, it were a dead book." Cone, *The Gospel and Its Earliest Interpretations*, 376-379.



New Testament that transformation of the Gospel which was carried out to the extreme on other lines by the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> The preceding pages seem to lead to the conclusion that since the teachings of theology and ecclesiasticism which have ruled the thought and life of the Christian world are in relation to the Gospel of alien origin and antagonistic spirit, the whole history of the Christian religion is little else than a record of aberration from the primary essential truths of the Gospel. It will be objected that such a picture of that history is out of drawing and far too dark in color, and there is much to sustain the objection. That Christianity soon came to be at variance with the Gospel will indeed be increasingly manifest as we enter more fully into the principles of Jesus and their spirit takes possession of us. Yet it never wholly lost the Gospel. The unthinking faith and simple piety which has led multitudes to the following of Jesus in his life of purity and goodness has been through all the ages the salt of the Christian religion.

Amid all the darkened speculations, the barren creeds, the dreary dogmas which denote the well-meant infidelity of men to the teaching and the spirit of Jesus, there is discernible a ray of inextinguishable light in the sentiment of loyalty to him as our acknowledged Master. It is a strange paradox that among those who have most radically misconceived Christianity have been found many who have most truly lived it.<sup>2</sup>

For life is illogical and, as Madame de Staël remarked: "la plupart des hommes vrais sont inconséquent." The

<sup>1</sup> "By the time the Church had been fully organised the whole diameter of thought separated Christianity from the mind of Christ. Everything that he valued most, with the exception of such sentiments and rules of life as devotion to his person had forced upon the conscience of Christendom, had either been ignored or proscribed. Everything that he hated most had been accepted, systematised and authoritatively taught." *The Creed of Christ*, 171.

<sup>2</sup> Cone, *op. cit.*, 392.

Christianity of history is a complex of many different forces and tendencies, because all human thought and action issue from human nature, and human nature is complex and comprehensive of conflicting elements. Christianity is an amalgam; something of pure gold—something of Jesus himself—has always existed amidst over much alloy of base metal, and Jesus' own religion, so far as it has been practically realised, has been Christianity's vitality and power. The Christian religion has been shaped and moulded by the power of the Zeitgeist, by the diverse influences of successive ages. Its history shows us an endeavor to realise the Gospel ideal, but checked and baffled by the intrusion of ideas, sentiments and practices of ancient religion. We can scarcely maintain that the course of that history was so exceptionally guided by divine Providence that every doctrine or practise that prevailed was therefore for the best. The maxim "whatever is is right" is the one Candide found so strikingly at variance with his own experience, and one which, as Dickens remarks, entails the consequence that nothing that ever was, was wrong. When after Constantine the Church's struggle for existence ceases and it comes to terms with the world, one hesitates to say whether that pagan world has become converted to Christianity or Christianity to paganism.<sup>1</sup> Yet it is idle to inveigh against the necessity or the contingency that dominate in human history and force disastrous compromises. After all, the treasure committed to earthen vessels was in large part preserved. Though a heavy incubus of distortion and perversion has long lain upon the Gospel, that has

<sup>1</sup> "Que dirons nous de l'église catholique après Constantine? N'est il pas vrai que dans la transformation religieuse qui s'opérait alors il y a eu double et réciproque conversion, et qu'il est difficile de dire si le monde païen a été plus modifié par le Christianisme, ou le Christianisme plus profondément pénétré et envahi par les moeurs et la religion qu'il croyait remplacer?" A. Sabatier, *Esquisse d'Une Philosophie de la Religion*, 209.

never succeeded in stifling it; always it has lived on and found its way to the hearts and minds of men. "Throughout the centuries we see the recurring effort to get back to the living teacher, to reach through speculations about Jesus to Jesus himself, and wherever this effort has shown itself the Life has still been the light of men."<sup>1</sup>

While the contrast is plain enough between the Gospel and the religion that embodies it, yet the higher our point of view and the wider our outlook, the clearer it becomes that through all its strangely chequered history Christianity has been slowly working toward the realisation of its inner truth. If men have been dull and slow of heart to apprehend the Gospel revelation, if they have followed blind guides and fallen into the ditch, if the Christian Church had to be of her time and could not but share in the superstition of dark days—still under all misconception and materialisation the slow process of a spiritual evolution has gone on unceasingly. When we remember that in the life of man, as in the thought of God, a thousand years are as one day, we can see that in these stumbling steps and twilight gropings and many a wandering from the way, there yet has been a constant progress—a progress that may be figured by a spiral winding round a cone which at every revolution seems to return upon itself but in the end will reach the top. The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: every vital force of the divine order works noiselessly, gaining its end by quiet persistence and a gentle insinuation. Such was the power that quickened the hearts of the first believers with a new life, and though the early beauty of its efflorescence was but for a season, that power has never ceased to work upon the world. Patiently it has adapted itself to unfavorable environment and made the best of hard condi-

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, 131.

tions if it might lead the better any human movement or minister more helpfully to any human need. As Rothe has said, "Christianity is the most mutable of all things, and this is its special glory." Now we find it working through priesthood and papacy, as the best the time allowed, and again in spite of them: and whether working by such instruments or against such obstacles, always a spiritual power, distinct from dogmas, churches, creeds, and codes. Religious systems have their day, and the Gospel enters in and dwells there; but as in a tabernacle, not a fixed abiding place. The system is for an age; the Gospel too is for that age, but also for all time. It has been the life of one system after another; it cannot be made into a system itself. Under every form of mechanism it is felt to be a living power, a spirit of light and life in the breast of humanity, endlessly diffusive, fostering the germ of every better growth and keeping alive in errors and evils some soul of goodness and truth.

And as we trace this power in the past, we may trust to it the future. "*L'avenir, c'est le présent bien vu,*" and to one who can discern the signs of this time the aspect of the coming years is bright with promise. We have heard much complaint in the religious press and elsewhere of a growing defection from the churches on the part of the more intelligent and active minded, and there follow groans over the materialism of the age, its loss of faith and lack of religious feeling. But religious people are apt to see through a glass darkly and take a very narrow view. It is plain to a deeper insight that interest in the vital questions of religion was never stronger or wider spread than it is today. It is not from any atrophy of the religious sense that it fails to respond to the appeal of the churches, it is because that appeal speaks a dead language. If the Christian Church only reiterates the thought of the past in the terms of the past and has no clear message for

the living present, we cannot wonder at the loss of her attractive power. To regain it she must preach such a gospel that men whose problems, struggles, and temptations are those of this day shall feel it to be a thing for them—shall find in it not merely a reminiscent application to the Nicene or the Reformation age, but answers to questions of the hour and guidance for life in this modern world. And for this she has only to preach the real Gospel of Jesus.

In his teaching of righteousness, love, purity, and unselfishness, and in his example of obedience, self-sacrifice, and helpfulness, are contained the highest motives and inspirations of which man is susceptible. . . . The great verities of the Gospel have an inappreciable worth for the ends of spiritual culture. They establish man's faith in himself and in the divine order of the world. Trust in them produces hope and courage. They enter into the structure of all true character and constitute the vital principle of spiritual development.<sup>1</sup>

This Gospel nothing can antiquate; it is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and it is the one need of the present. We are living in a world of wider horizon and more complex harmonies than was known to our fathers. The religious motives that inspired them are outworn and powerless; once they were magnets, but now they fail to magnetise. The religious ideas they cherished seem survivals of a pre-historic time, and we know instinctively that the truth is larger than the dogma. Flimsy schemes of salvation spun out of the theological cobwebs of the past are hanging in tatters, and theories of the Bible and the Church which served good purpose in former days have been relegated with other antique furniture to the

<sup>1</sup> Cone, *op. cit.*, 393 and 378. What the Gospel can do for our modern life is set forth very fully and impressively in the last chapter of Prof. Schmidt's *The Prophet of Nazareth*, entitled "The Leadership of Jesus."



mental lumber-room. Now, as in the great thirteenth century, the Spirit of Truth is calling us out of a conventional religionism into the wider ways of the world's life. We are coming to see with the prophet that God has poured out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that the eternal Pentecost is the coming of that Spirit in the primal constitution of humanity. The traditions of ecclesiasticism make men reluctant to admit of a spiritual presence and power anywhere outside of institutional Christianity, and it is their conviction that the only moral and spiritual energies that work upon the world have leaked out from the Church, like thin streams through the cracks of a reservoir. But God's omnipotence is not the servant of any ecclesiastical methods, nor so patient a force as to work through these alone. The feeling that would confine His presence to the sacred seclusion of the Church, as if it were profane to seek Him in the manifold movement of the world, is a survival from the decadent Judaism which had lost the inspiration of an earlier day. There is a strange kind of faith that looks back to a bygone age for the God it cannot find in its own, and a strange kind of piety that can trust Him for heaven but not for earth. The dismal chant of the Monk of Cluny—made into a modern hymn—tells us to give up this world as hopeless and turn our gaze to the celestial world where all is blessedness and joy; yet how one who fails to discover God's presence in this world which he hath seen can be so sure of Him in some other world which he hath not seen is a little difficult to understand. Something still lingers of the old idea of a natural enmity between the Church and the world, yet the only real contrast and conflict is between good and evil, not between sacred and secular.

That which is needed, and for lack of which Christianity languishes, is a wider outlook, a determination to look the

world in the face without misgiving or mistrust, to harmonise, to foster, and to inspire the various spheres and interests which the Providence of God opens to the men of our day.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity has been for too long a specialism and a small affair: the affair of religious people whom the sect spirit tends to form into a sort of close corporation, and who fail to see that we lose the whole Gospel if we make our communion as Christians anything different from our brotherhood as men; the affair of people concerned only with the separate soul and the future life, and who therefore fall behind and part company with the general advance of civilisation and the growth of human culture, and are even sometimes opposed to these as merely secular and worldly. Such a Christianity strangles the Gospel. For what is the Gospel? It is the revelation of the Heavenly Father and a call to communion with Him through a heart and will in harmony with the Good, a call to the love of God and of men. It is a transforming power which pervades all feeling and actuates all conduct; it is a new spirit in the man and a new way of living. Can that have any other embodiment than just life itself? Will not the religion embodied in something narrower than human life be something narrower than the Gospel of Jesus? He called his followers the light of the world, the salt of the earth; the Kingdom of God was leaven to penetrate and energise the whole life of mankind. Religion seems content to cultivate its garden, without laboring to prepare the way of the Lord in the waste places of the earth. It will compass sea and land to make proselytes, but it is to bring them into the garden; there is no effort to make the wilderness blossom as the rose.<sup>2</sup> There are

<sup>1</sup> Fremantle, *The Gospel of the Secular Life*, 8.

<sup>2</sup> The churches send missionaries to China, but in the days of the sand lots oratory and the cry to exclude the Chinese, whom economic forces were bringing in multitudes to our shores, they did not recognise the divine

men today contriving and toiling to improve existing conditions in every walk of life. If we ask who they are, the answer will not always be that they are Christians; but they are none the less co-workers with God because their work is what some call secular and they do not come to Church or seem to care about religion. They care at least for the betterment of social life, for the bringing into a truer order the confused affairs of men; and for this, we may be sure, God too cares and "worketh hitherto."

The Church claims to be a divine institution, but has not been willing to recognise that the secular institutions which organise the development of secular society have also a divine foundation and that the forces working for social progress are leading toward a divine end. If we cannot always see this in detail, if indeed we find much of evil tendency in our modern life, that should not blind us to the broad truth. Faith in God should teach us that the errors of men cannot annul the force of heaven moving to noble issues in mankind. Nor is there such a conflict of faith and sight as some have supposed. Past centuries tell the story of accelerating human progress, and in this age of ours—because it is the latest—can be seen a wider and more potent dominance of spiritual forces than the world hitherto has known. Too long they have been concentrated in exclusive channels, and their release is not a loss to the Church but a gain to the world. Look at the associations for political reform, the countless organisations of philanthropic effort, the discoveries of science and their application to mechanical inventions, the cultivation of art and the employment of the artistic spirit in the humble things of common life, and you will find in these

---

leadership of the migration, nor rise to the great opportunity it brought to their doors, nor utter a word of protest against the hard selfishness that blocked the way of the immigrants to the wider life and higher civilisation of the new world.

and other such secular agencies an undreamed of power for the uplifting of mankind. The truth is that in human progress, as in our personal being, the material and the spiritual are interwoven, and the world, like Wordsworth's cloud, "moves altogether if it moves at all." Looking back to eighteenth-century life, as it is painted in *Tom Jones*, we cannot doubt that morals and religion have travelled by the railway and that electricity, turned to so many uses, has had a spiritual significance and wrought unforeseen effects.

The wide outlook then has much to encourage the optimist; nevertheless the immediate present has its dangers and difficulties that make the Gospel of Jesus the one need of the world today. The serious menace of social unrest is calling for its ministry of reconciliation. The age-long war between capital and labor—the two that should be yoke-fellows—is waged on wider scale. Out of their pinched and narrow life the sullen hostility of ill-paid wage-workers is rising against the rich, carelessly indifferent to hard conditions they do not trouble to investigate. Schemes are not lacking to order matters for the better, and vigorous efforts are making to that end. Yet no permanent cure can be effected by treating the symptoms of disease. If we are true to the method of Jesus we shall not be content to divide the inheritance between two selfish brothers, for our endeavor must be to make both brothers generous and just. We must go down to something deeper than all class division and social estrangement, the manhood in which all men are one, the underlying unity which makes all our conventional distinctions pitiful in the sight of God. It is only the renewal of a right spirit in the hearts of men that can make real the ideal of the Revolution, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Let me add that it is in the light of the Gospel we learn what liberty really is. It is not doing as we please, but doing

the right of our own volition. We see everywhere today a conflict between self-will and external authority, and it is the failure to harmonise these opposing forces that makes democracy a perilous experiment. An archbishop has declared that he would rather see England free than England sober; the Czar for his part would have Russia sober rather than free. Surely it is desirable that men should be at once free and sober. As I have said, the only true freedom is autonomy and we shall not really have a self-governing State until we have self-governing men for its citizens; we shall have either an anarchy of self-will or a despotism of compulsion.

The present conditions that confront them carry a plain message to the preachers of religion: "Soyez de votre siècle!" They who are for standing on the ancient ways, forgetting that Time, the great innovator, never stands still, will surely be left standing there alone. The religion that is to win the modern mind will not be cast in the mould of any past epoch, or narrowed to the notions of any one sect. The faith of the future will be a doctrine not merely certified as orthodox by due authority, but one which commends itself as true and carries with it its own authentication. Much water has run under the bridges since upholders of traditional doctrine could successfully employ the method of meeting the conclusions of science or criticism by denouncing four fifths of modern learning as infidelity, and since ecclesiastical intolerance could safely silence by force teachings it could not refute by argument. Mere freedom of utterance, however, leaves something to be desired. Many have parted with an early "faith" that seems no longer reasonable, and yet they find little to attract them in a "reason" that offers nothing but negations, and they are halting irresolute, as sheep having no shepherd. I would say to them: You have been taught to identify the religion of Jesus with a theologico-ecclesias-



tical caricature, and you reject the one with the other. What is needed is to disengage them. Give your mind to a study of the life and words of Jesus, measure past or present teachings by the principles he revealed, and you will no longer confound his Gospel with any misrepresentation of it that has ever obtained among men. The words of Lessing are pertinent today: "After eighteen centuries of Christianity it is high time to go back to Christ."

For the Christian Church has scarcely preached the Gospel to the nations. It has been less concerned with righteousness and the Kingdom of God than with theologies and a Kingdom to come; and while it has preached Paulinism, Augustinism, and ecclesiolatry, it has too much ignored the teachings of the life which is the light of men. And I may remark in passing, if some earnest preachers drop the regulation themes, they are apt to turn to psychotherapy or Christian Socialism, which aim at improving physical health or securing a fairer distribution of this world's goods, rather than to the Gospel of Jesus which aims at awakening the spirit of man.

One Church prides itself on its historic continuity, another on its consistent adhesion to the necessity of conversion, another on its preservation of primitive forms of ritual, another on the intellectual consistency of its creed; but amongst all the forms of Church life is there one created by the special determination so to bring each human life under the full and radiant power of the personality of Jesus that this has become its characteristic note?<sup>1</sup>

This is the consummation devoutly to be wished. What I have had at heart in this little book is to bring before such readers as it finds the immense import of Jesus and his message to mankind. Its aim is wholly positive, and if it

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, August, 1904. "Humanity Measured by Jesus Christ," D. Macfayden.

seem a mere attack on Christianity, that is only because the first necessity is to clear the Gospel from the doctrinal futilities and ecclesiastical formalisms which have gone far to paralyse its vitalising action upon the world. This is to take the risk that some will only see in these pages support for the teachings of negation, and negation is a desert where one may wander forty years and leave his bones in the arid sands. And though such as have strength and staying power may cross the desert and reach the promised land of the higher positive, no one would wish to lead men thither who have not the qualities that will make it safe for them to undertake the journey. But time moves fast and the risk is not now what it would have been in earlier days. While some deplore a decay of ancient faith, and others hail their emancipation from its narrow bonds, the deeper spiritual impulse that moves our time is vital and constructive. If we find a growing indifference to conventional religionism it is because men are stirred with a sense of the deep realities of human life. The saying of Georges Sand seems coming true: "The decay of the old creeds restores allegiance to the true God." In religious circles this is called a time of transition, of change, and so much is obvious, but the important thing is to know the character of the change. In the natural world a young life is nurtured within some hard integument until its own expansive growth shall cast off the husk or shell. This is the change our time is ripe for. The living truth of the Gospel is breaking from its strict encasement in the forms and doctrines of the past and beginning to enter as an inspiration the hearts of men.<sup>1</sup> Long overlaid

<sup>1</sup> "The Gospel has been in the past the vivifying moral principle beneath dogmas and rites—like those subterranean springs which supplying the moisture of the deeper layers of the soil make it possible for strong and deep-rooted plants to sustain life in spite of the aridity of the higher layers; and the Gospel remains to adapt itself to the new conditions and the new needs of our day." J. Réville, *Liberal Christianity*, 108.

and stifled by ecclesiasticism and theology, it has lived on to become the unspoken creed of these later years. Like a captive bird that sees its cage falling in ruins where it has sighed so long imprisoned, and feels again that it has wings, the revelation in Jesus finds the hour of its deliverance at hand. As Renan has said, "pour se renouveler le Christianisme n'a qu'à revenir à l'Évangile." And if our religion today is simpler, more rational, and more humane than that of past days, it is so in the degree in which it is a return to the religion of Jesus. "We who are able to pass in review the centuries that have come and gone since Christ died, can see that things are working for the emergence of his ideas and for their eventual triumph."<sup>1</sup> We can see how the Gospel is laying its grasp upon the younger and how it ennobles all upon whom it lays its grasp. A deep instinctive faith in its revelation of divine fatherhood and human brotherhood is the ruling idea of our day. Instinctive and voiceless, yet it underlies and shapes all our social movements, it dominates in every sphere of thought and life.

And the future belongs to it. What the Gospel can do for the healing of the nations cannot be read in Christian history, is not a matter of experience, but is yet to be ascertained. Its life is all before it. It has a future of which past ages scarcely utter a prophecy, but some glimpse of it is offered in the signs of this time. And one of these is this: that now it is not here and there an open mind with little influence upon an alien world—a Falkland or a Hales—that gains insight of the deep simplicities of Jesus, but his true Gospel is coming to reach the world itself, coming to be known by the mass of men who have any power of thought and can distinguish the real from the counterfeit,—can be turned to that wisdom of the just which consists in seeing things exactly as they are.

<sup>1</sup> *The Creed of Christ*, 194.

To change modes of belief which had been long established and transmitted from generation to generation; to free the general mind from the hold of inveterate prejudice; to bring about a silent revolution in the thought and feeling of mankind in relation to the profoundest of all objects of thought and feeling—this was the mission of the Gospel at the first. It was by the force of its appeal to the spiritual nature of man that Christianity made its first impression upon the world, first established itself among the things that are. But once established, it drew to itself an overwhelming concourse of minds and hearts unspiritual; of men who accepted the prevalent religion because it made for their advantage, or because they were of those who run with the crowd, or who find it convenient and desirable to have a religion of some sort and are not particular of what sort it is. And so, taking into itself the false ideas of older religions, the gross aims and motives of the world, apostolic Christianity was vulgarised and vitiated, became earthly, sensual, and not a little devilish. To change again these false and worldly ways of thought and life, now prevalent not in the world alone but entrenched within the Church, infecting and debasing Christianity itself, could not be the work of a single age. The so-called Reformation broke off some fragments of the papal empire, but it was a battle fought in the fog with indecisive results. The old theology was left substantially unchanged; Calvin and the rest rescored the theme of Augustine with unimportant variations of their own. The movement was a revolt rather than a reconstruction, and its leaders had their share of ignorance, prejudice, and passion. No one dreamed of religious tolerance, still less of religious freedom. The Synod of Dort is scarcely a more pleasing spectacle than the Council of Trent; the Confessions of Augsburg or Westminster went as wide of the Gospel as any dogmas of the Catholics, and assent

to them was no less rigorously enforced; and as for ecclesiastical tyranny, no priesthood in its most insolent day of power surpassed the Presbyterian ministers of Scotland. Well might Friedrich von Logau exclaim: "The Papists, the Lutherans, the Calvinists are extant and flourishing; but where is Christianity?" Little was done to meet the need of the time, for no less was needed then the reconstruction of the whole fabric of society, changing fundamentally the character—mental, moral, spiritual—of men and nations. And this is what the Gospel has been about these hundreds of years while at times it seemed to be doing nothing and almost to have disappeared from the world. The nineteenth century saw more of this needed work accomplished than any other, and its successor is carrying it on. Christianity today is a power fresher and more vigorous than at any time since it was first heard of in an Empire that tried in vain to crush it or to cope with it. No more is needed to confirm a wavering faith than to see how Christianity, returning to the Gospel, is divinely gifted with the power of being ever young. The day has come, not, as the superficial tell us, of its being numbered with the things that were—for this is only true of other things that take its name in vain—but the day has come for its putting forth its full power for the regeneration of the world. And as we learn to make God's ends for us the conscious aims of our striving we shall hasten the coming of His Kingdom upon earth, no longer in the form of any separate association, but rather as a new soul infused into all those organic social relations which mould and educate the life of man; a Kingdom founded in the security of domestic affection, the steadfastness of friendship, the loyalty of business life, the self-devotion of public spirit, the righteousness of political rule, the peace and good-will between nations which is to usher in the federation of the world.



These last words, written in the days of peace, seem strangely discordant with reality in this time of furious warfare.<sup>1</sup> Such hopeful anticipations seem overborne and silenced by the thunder of the cannon, the crash of falling cities, the cries of agony from a thousand miles of trenches. Yet through the darkness of this night of horror we will not lose faith in the dawning of a better day. What we see is God arising to shake terribly the earth, but the things which cannot be shaken shall remain. "Our God is a consuming fire," and what He is burning up is the sordid selfishness of commercialism, the soft love of ease and pleasure, the feeble laxity of civic virtue, the mean forsaking of high responsibilities. And, as Carlyle has it, in this fire-whirlwind creation and destruction proceed together. The war is calling out the noblest qualities of our nature: the heroism of self-devotion unto death, the strong resolve and patient fortitude of a people that girds its loins to dare and do and suffer, the world-wide stirring of the human heart, the generous sympathy, the loving service given to the unhappy victims of the cruelty of war. It has seemed good in God's sight, we may believe, that unbridled greed and brutal savagery, casting to the winds all decency, should come into the open and frankly show themselves at their extreme, so that the conflict with what is most evil in humanity should be brought to a decisive issue. And if we have faith in God and in Man we cannot think that issue doubtful.

And that faith gains vision of a political future brighter than the world has known. I spoke of the peace that shall bring the federation of the world, but it is plain now that the way to that peace is through war, that it must be fought for and conquered. For political society has been based on the false principle of competitive national interests. With the fall of the Roman Empire fell the Pax

<sup>1</sup> November, 1915.

Romana its single sovereignty had maintained. As the conflict and turmoil of the barbarian invasions subsided, attempts were made to re-establish the Empire of the West, but they proved practically unavailing and there gradually grew up in Europe a system of independent sovereign States, the sovereignty of each clashing with that of its neighbors, and the history of Europe has been mainly a history of warfare. Now and again a State gaining ascendancy—Spain, then France—has aspired to the domination of Europe, and now Germany seeks the domination of the world. Yet it is given to no one nation to embody the life of all. Their mutual limitations declare the “particularity” of the nations. “Man is parcelled out in men”; yet Man is ever one in nature and destiny. Every people is a member of humanity; it does not live to itself alone, but in this membership resides its being, and its true greatness lies in the measure of its consciousness of organic relation to the organic whole and of its ability to grasp and realise the aims of universal man. National ambition, blinded by selfishness, makes for disintegration and can only rouse resentment and resistance. It is the lesson of history that the sovereignty of separate States means the perpetuation of war, and this world war is teaching us that enduring peace is only possible on condition of the surrender of absolute sovereignty on the part of particular States to a federal World-State,—just as the American colonies in 1787 surrendered their individual sovereignty to unite in a federal republic. In such an international State the central authority would act directly on the people, as our Government does; it would be a State democratically controlled, as ours is, and war between nations would be as impossible as between two States of our Union. To this end, we may hope, the God who guides the course of history is leading us, and for this, though unconsciously, men today are fighting. To

this, it seems, the war must come—not at once nor without meeting serious difficulties, such as beset the founders of our nation—or else to the World-Empire of a people who have shown themselves recreant to all that is highest in humanity. And again we cannot doubt the issue.







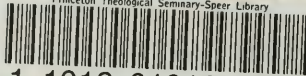


## Date Due

[illegible]



Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01016 4749